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Instructions For the WHOLE YEAR.

PART II.

FOR

SUNDAYS

BEING

Practical Thoughts on the EPISTLES of all the SUNDAYS and Movable FEASTS from the *Octave* of *Easter* to *Quinquagesima Sunday*.

Printed in the Year 1695.

THE

PREFACE.

I *Am very ſenſible, how difficult it is to give Inſtructions, eſpecially when Zeal it ſelf, thro' Human weakneſs, is ſubject to many falſe ſteps, and endeavouring to remove Abuſes, may eaſily carry the ſtroke ſo far, as to give diſquiet to Pious Souls, in ſuch Practices, which in their particular circumſtances, are not at all reprehenſible. This may be the caſe of the following Inſtructions, and therefore I here make it my requeſt to the Pious Reader, That if in the Cenſure of known Corruptions, he finds here any thing pronounc'd with ſuch*

seeming Severity, as may give occa-sion to him of such disturbance, he would not make an over-hasty Application of it to himself, but con-sult those, under whose Conduct he is, how far he may be concern'd in what is said. This ought to be the Rule in reading all Books of Di-rection, and I desire may be in this: For thus only can I accomplish my Design, that while I desire to In-struct many, I may impose on none. In this manner I consult the Peace of all Pious and Well-principled Souls, and bespeak their most fa-vourable Construction of these Sun-day-Lessons, *in return to my Cha-rity for them, and hope, that ha-ving here given them this Caution, they will not condemn me for being severe to them, since now they can-not justly do it, without being se-vere to me. But now, as for be-ing represented under this Chara-cter by others, 'tis what I expect,*

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and, it may be, desire: For tho' I know how to have Compassion and Pray for all that are under any Spiritual Infirmity, yet I resolve not to flatter or favour them in it. This is a Weakness we are all generally too subject to, in regard of our selves; and whoever makes any Observation, will easily discover the great mischiefs of it, and how pernicious it is in its consequences. 'Tis a thing I often lament and wish I could contribute any thing to its cure; and this being the design of the following Instructions, it cannot be expected I should be Favourable, but Severe to every thing which I see to be the Cause or Occasion of those Evils, which are prejudicial to Souls, and a Scandal to the Christian World. 'Tis on this consideration, I may be found to pass very hard Censures on several things, which in practice are by many reputed Innocent, and, it

may be, have Example, Custom and Authority to plead for them; and were I to be an Advocate for the World, I should then as much favour as I now heartily condemn them. But having undertaken a better Cause, I endeavour to consider every thing, as it regards Eternity; and as I find it prejudicial to this end, so accordingly I fix its Character, without any respect at all to what the World says of it. Hence I foresee a necessary disagreement with all those, who have no other Idea of things, than what Custom and Practice have imprinted in them, and I shall be judg'd Severe, for not concurring with their Sentiments. But 'tis what I desire rather to bear, than prevent or remedy. I have taken the Weights of the Sanctuary into my Hand, and as every thing weighs, so I give in the value; if it agrees not with what others are al-

already prepoſſeſs'd with, 'tis becauſe they follow another Account, and ſuch as I cannot do, without betraying the Cauſe I have undertaken. I know the World to be Corrupt, and its ways generally Perverſe, and have ſo mean an Opinion of it, that had I no other motive, my only diſagreeing with it, would be an argument of my being in the right. What ſuch and ſuch others therefore do, weighs but little in my Ballance, except only where Perſons regulate what they do by the Principles of the Goſpel and the Doctrine of Chriſt. 'Tis there I learn what the World is, that it is an Enemy to God, that its Greatneſs is Vanity, that its Wiſdom is Foolishneſs: There I learn, what I my ſelf am; that I am Duſt and Aſhes, that of my ſelf I can do nothing, that my Inclinations are Corrupt, and my Deſires oppoſit to God, and that to follow him I muſt renounce

both the World and my self. This is not only mine, but every Christians Cause; 'tis what they have all undertaken at the Font, and must be the Practice of their lives, if they live up to what they Profess: and if they do not, 'tis the Gospel reproves and condemns them and not I. For if there they are commanded to Follow Christ, *and be* Followers of God, as his dearest Children, *What Authority of* Custom *or* Practice *can dispense with them in this Duty? Is not the Gospel their Condemnation in as many particulars, as they depart from God, to follow the World or themselves? 'Tis some of these Particulars I endeavour to lay before them: and if the World appears Uneasie or Angry at it, it is not a surprize to me; for I never thought it Humble enough to hear of its Faults, without expressing its resentment and dislike; this is only*

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doing like it ſelf. It did ſo to our Divine Maſter, and to experience ſomething of it, is one Argument at leaſt of a true Diſciple. Well, but may not this buſineſs of laying before the World its Corrupt Practices, be preſs'd with too great rigour, ſo as to prove a diſcouragement to many from ever thinking of a Reformation? The Narrow Way may be deſcrib'd Narrower than it really is, and this will be no ſervice to Chriſtianity, but a condemnation of one Extreme, by running into another. This has been often ſo in points of Faith; the preſſing the Cauſe too far againſt the Neſtorians *made* Eutychians; *and may there not be the ſame danger in Morals? Something of this there may be, and thoſe, who are in love with their admir'd Liberties, I doubt not, will make uſe of this Plea, that they may never think themſelves oblig'd to quit them. But*

however we may ſuppoſe this danger in the Teacher, is there any reaſon to apprehend it in thoſe, that undertake to follow him? In matters of Faith, 'tis eaſie running too far, becauſe Truth conſiſts in a Point, and has Error on each ſide. But in Morals it is not ſo; for tho' the Precepts are determin'd and fix'd, yet thoſe, who do more than the Precepts abſolutely oblige, are ſo far from being Reprehenſible, that they are the better Chriſtians for it: to come ſhort of them is Criminal, but to out go them is Perfection. However therefore I may be expos'd to over-ſights in preſſing more than is neceſſary, there's but little danger in thoſe that pretend to practice of being better than they ſhould be, let them do their utmoſt, 'tis very likely they'll come ſhort of what is preſcrib'd, and that if I have gone too far, they'll in this correct my Er-

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ror; an Error, which, if a real one, will be easily pardon'd by all, who seriously considering the almost Universal depravation of Christians, will give allowances to Zeal and conclude there's but very little danger of pressing Duties too far: a Crooked Stick must be bent a little the other way for to make it come strait. Tho' I am of Opinion too, none will Censure me even for this, but only such, as take the measures of Christianity from Education, Example and Practice, and hence being possess'd with wrong Notions, are likely to disapprove of these Directions, which consider not so much what Christians are, as what they ought to be. But since from the Gospel it self and St. Paul's Epistles, the First and Best Comment upon it, is taken the Christian's Character here describ'd in these Instructions, I hope it may so far prevail on Prejudice it self,

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as first to consider the Authority on which it is grounded, and then reflect, whether it carries not so much weight with it, as to make them question at least the Truth *of that* Idea of a Christian life, *with which they are already possess'd from other Principles. This is the only request I make in behalf of all that follows, and I think 'tis reasonable: To the just issue of such a Consideration I sincerely Appeal; and that I may contribute something to a fair Determination, I will here set down some Principles of the* Gospel *and* Sacred Epistles, *which may give light to the bringing in just Verdict.*

And First, As to the Notion Christians ought to have of the World; *Christ says,* The World hates him, and so it will those that follow him: That if they were of the World, the World would

would love its own. but becauſe you are not of the World, but I have choſen you out of the World, therefore the World hates you. *Jo.* 15. 18. Know you not, that the Friendſhip of the World is Enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God. *Jam.* 4. 4. Love not the World, nor the things that are in the World. If any Man loves the World, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 *Jo.* 2. 15. The whole World lies in wickedneſs. 1 *Jo.* 5. 19. Whatſoever is born of God, overcomes the world. 1 *Jo.* 5. 4. We have receiv'd, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God. 1 *Cor.* 2. 12. Be not conform'd to the world. *Rom.* 12. 2.

Secondly, As to the Idea Chriſtians are to have of the Fleſh: We are

are not Debters to the Flesh, to live according to the Flesh: for if you live according to the Flesh, you shall die. *Rom.* 8. 12. They, who are according to the Flesh, mind the things of the Flesh, but they, who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit: for to be carnally minded is death; but to be Spiritually minded, is life and peace: because the Carnal mind is Enmity with God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can it be. So then they that are in the Flesh (*that is, live according to it*) cannot please God. But you are not in the Flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. *Rom.* 8. 5. 6, 7, 8, 9. The Animal or Carnal Man perceives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them

them, becauſe they are Spiritually diſcern'd. 1 *Cor.* 2. 14.

Thirdly, The works of the Fleſh are Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Idolatry, VVitchcraft, Enmities, Strife, Jealouſies, Anger, Quarrelling, Diſſentions, Hereſies, Envy, Murder, Drunkenneſs, Revelling and ſuch like, of which I tell you, as I have already told you, that they who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God. *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. *Again*, They follow the works of the Fleſh and are given over to a reprobate mind, who are fill'd with all Iniquity, Malice, Fornication, Covetouſneſs, Wickedneſs, full of Envy, Murther, Contention, Fraud, Malignity, Whiſperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, Injurious, Proud, Boaſters, Inventers

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of Evil, Disobedient to Parents, without Understanding, without Modesty, without Natural Affection, Covenant-breakers, Unmerciful. *Rom.* 1. 29. 30.

Fourthly, The World and Flesh being corrupt, the Christians obligation is to renounce both: They are to mortifie the deeds of the Flesh by the Spirit. *Rom.* 8. 13. are not to make provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof. *Rom.* 13. 14. They are to crucifie their Flesh with its affections and Lusts. *Gal.* 5. 24. For he that soweth to his Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap corruption. *Gal.* 6. 8. They are to overcome the world. 1 *Jo.* 5. 4. The world is to be crucified to them, and they to the world. *Gal.* 6. 14. They are to deny themselves, take up their Cross and follow Christ. *Mat.* 16. 24.

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They are to be buried with Christ by Baptism into death: be planted together in the likeness of his death: their Old Man is to be crucified with him, that the Body of Sin may be destroy'd, and they serve Sin no more: they are to be dead with Christ, dead to Sin. *Rom.* 6. 5. 6, 8, 11. They are to put off their former conversation, the Old Man, which is corrupt according to its deceitful Lusts. *Eph.* 4. 22. They are always to bear about in the body the mortification of Jesus Christ. 2 *Cor.* 4 10. Renounce Impiety, and worldly Affections. *Tit.* 2. 12. Mortifie their Members, which are upon Earth, Uncleanness, Inordinate Affection. *Col.* 3. 5. They are to abstain from all things to gain the Crown; Chastise their Bodies and bring them into subjection. 1 *Cor.* 9. 25. 27.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Being oblig'd to renounce the World and themselves, how are Christians to live? The life of Jesus is to be manifested in them. 2 *Cor.* 4. 11. Christ is to be formed in them. *Gal.* 4. 19. They are to walk in the Spirit. *Gal.* 5. 16. become a new Creature in Christ. 2 *Cor.* 5. 17. Be renew'd in Spirit: put on the New Man, which is created according to God in Justice and true Holiness. *Ephes.* 4. 23. 24. Be reform'd by renewing their mind. *Rom.* 12. 2. Serve in the newness of Spirit. *Rom.* 7. 6. Walk in the newness of life. *Rom.* 6. 4. Put on our Lord Jesus Christ. *Rom.* 13. 14. Walk so even as he himself walked. 1 *Jo.* 2. 6. Be a new Creature in Christ 2 *Cor.* 5. 17. Be led by the spirit of God, for whoever has

has not the ſpirit of Chriſt is none of his. *Rom.* 8. 9. 14.

Sixthly, Chriſtians being oblig'd to renounce the World and themſelves, and walk by the Spirit of Chriſt, St. Paul *declares in particular what they are to avoid, as things inconſiſtent with this Spirit,* viz. All Injuſtice, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Murther, Maliciouſneſs, Contention, Animoſity, Anger, Hatred, Envy, Backbiting, Whiſpering, Pride, Diſobedience, Theft, Deceit, Drunkenneſs, Gluttony, Revellings, Covetouſneſs, Fooliſh talking, Filthy Communication, Idolatry, Prophaneneſs, Hereſies, Vain Babling, Curſing, Revenge, Raſh Judgment, Falſe Accuſation. They are to do wrong to none, Defraud none, nor corrupt any Man; they are not to bite, nor devour others; nor be

lovers

lovers of themſelves, nor of Pleaſures; they are not to be Fierce or High-minded, nor truſt in Riches, and ſpeak evil of no Man; they are not to be ſlothful in Buſineſs, nor Impatient, nor return evil for evil, *&c.*

Seventhly, The ſame Apoſtle declares what are the Duties of Chriſtians in conſequence of their being led by the Spirit of Chriſt, viz. The love of God and their Neighbour, Joy, Peace, Long ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance: they are to put on the bowels of mercy, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of mind, forbearing and forgiving others, keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, ſpeak the Truth, do good to all men, be never weary in well-doing; Perſecuted they are to ſuffer, and when revil'd, they are

are to bleſs: they are to cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs of the Fleſh and the Spirit, walk worthy of their Vocation, worthy of God, as his Children, pleaſing to all, fruitful in every good work: they are to be ſober and watchful; walk circumſpectly, redeeming the time, underſtanding what is the VVill of God: They are to ſtudy to be quiet and do their own buſineſs, withdraw themſelves from every Brother, that walketh diſorderly, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, ſupport the weak, be patient towards all men, and abſtain from all appearance of evil. Not live to themſelves, but to him, who died for them; think on whatever things are honeſt, whatever things are juſt, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report; if there be

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any virtue, if there be any praiſe, let them think on theſe things. Their Converſation is to be as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt; they are to ſeek thoſe things, which are above, ſet their affections on things above, not on things on Earth; whatever they do in word or deed, they are to do all in the Name of our Lord Jeſus. They are to be fervent in Prayer, given to Hoſpitality, feed their Enemy, rejoice in hope; preſent their Bodies a living Sacrifice, Holy, acceptable to God, proving what is the good, acceptable and perfect Will of God.

Theſe are the Characters the Scripture gives of the World and the Fleſh, and of a Chriſtian life; and hence ought to be taken the rule of what we are to approve, and what diſlike; of what we are to follow,

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and what to avoid. And tho' the too general Practice of Christians be not very conformable to these; yet Practice is different from the Gospel, I hope there's no need of a long deliberation to determine, which ought to take place. This, if I mistake not, is all I have done; shewing no respect to Custom and Example, when I find them contrary to the Gospel: as I see things there already determin'd, so accordingly I declare for them, or against them; recommending whatever may be serviceable for our coming up to that life, which is there describ'd as the life of Christ, and ought to be the life of every Christian, and discouraging whatever in Practice I see either immediately or remotely is a hindrance to it. These are the measures I take, and are such as must stand good; all others are false and will not be allow'd in the day of Accounts. If there be any mistake,

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it can be only in the application of them, and this the Charitable Reader will pardon in me and take care to prevent in himself; for as I desire to help him, so I desire this help may no ways be perverted to his prejudice, and with this caution I leave him to all that follows.

Instructions

Instructions
FOR
SUNDAYS.

Low-Sunday.

EPISTLE.

1 *Jo.* 5. C. V. 4. ends V. 10.

ALL *that are born of God, overcome the World.* To overcome the World, a Christian must be possess'd of that inward Constancy and Strength of Mind, as to be proof against all the snares of this World, so as neither to

ſeduc'd by its errors, nor charm'd with its flatteries, nor frighted by its terrors: but ever keep on ſteddy to his duty, ſo that nothing that is earthly, ſhall be able either to perſwade or force him from it. The trial of this Conſtancy frequently occurs, and there's ſcarce a day wherein the world makes not its attempts on every Chriſtian, and ſeeks to overthrow or weaken him, either by its friendſhip or its frowns. But he that is born of God, overcomes the world; & that other conſequence is left to us to make: He that overcomes not the world, is not of God. 'Tis our concern now to examine, which part belongs to us; Whether we overcome the world, or are overcome by it. To diſcover this, we may divide the world into Four Conſiderations, and regard it. 1. As to its Vices. 2*ly*. As to the Uſe of Creatures. 3*ly*. As to its Misfortunes. 4*ly*. As to the Obligation or Charge, it brings on all that live in it: And if upon reflection, we find, we overcome it not, as to all theſe Diviſions; but yielding under ſome one part of it, are by its prevailing influence drawn from our duty to God, truly then we have reaſon to apprehend, that dreadful confequence belongs to us; *That we are not of God.*

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The caſe is very evident, as to the Firſt Part: For as many as purſue a ſinful courſe, and live under the guilt of any habitual vice whatever, are certainly ſlaves to ſome criminal paſſion, and conſequently have not overcome the world: therefore are not of God. For he that is of God, has overcome the World.

'Tis evident enough too, as to the Second Part: For wherever a Chriſtian is ſo violently bent on the enjoyment of thoſe Creatures, which are in his command, whether it be in relation to his *Divertiſement*, his *Intereſt*, or *Honour*, that thro' his over-earneſt application to theſe, he is wanting to many conſiderable Duties, he ows to God and his Soul; 'tis plain ſuch an one has not overcome the world; ſince for the world he forſakes God, and conſequently is not of God. For ſince Creatures were granted to Man for no other end, than to be ſerviceable to him in the neceſſities and reaſonable conveniencies of life, and while he's laboring for Heaven, to be referr'd by him to that Laſt End, to the encreaſe of whoſe honor all creatures ought to contribute in their degree: how can that Chriſtian value himſelf as innocent, or anſwer thoſe purpoſes of our Creator, who having receiv'd variety of

great blessigns from his hand, refers them not again, in the due use of them, to him; but makes himself their last end; in all seeking himself, and studying how to gratify in all he possesses, his own Sense and humor, which the good Christian ever labors to renounce and Mortify? Is it not plain, that Self-love governs here, that the Heart, the Thoughts, the Affections and Desires, are all possess'd with this corruption; and that such an one must give himself the lye, if he pretends to love God above all things, or to love him with all his heart and Soul? Truly I cannot tell how favourably some may judge of themselves in this case: but certainly such an one has a very worldly and sensual Soul, indulges himself in many liberty's too loose for the narrow way of the Gospel, and, upon an impartial examen, will be found accompanied with many considerable injustices both to God and his own Soul: and will not bear the character of a Conqueror, but Servant of the World.

The same is to be concluded, as to the Third Part: for however the misfortunes and troubles of this life, whether Temporal or Spiritual, are naturally a clog upon the Soul, and upon their first assault, a general hinderance to devotion;

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yet if a Christian, through uneasiness under them, either renounces his Duty and Profession, for the obtaining of relief; or else voluntarily sinks into such a degree of dejection, that he will hear of no comfort, nor use any endeavours for Submission and Peace, certainly such an one is considerably wanting in his duty, by living in an affected contradiction to the Will of God, by disowning the Justice of that hand, which inflicts the punishment, and betraying a very immoderate love of himself or other Creature, even to the preferring it to God; whilst for the disappointment or loss he suffers in it, he even renounces in some manner God himself. This is not to be understood of those, who surpriz'd by some suddain grief, for a time are violently oppress'd, but sensible of their weakness are willing to use means to moderate and endeavours to remove it; but of those above mention'd, who being sullen under their misfortune, obstinately set themselves against all methods proper for their cure: for these are so far from overcoming the world, that they are truly overwhelm'd by it. Though indeed many others too, I fear, must come in here and share in this guilt: for since every degree of melancholy or inward grief naturally indisposes the Soul, for

the due performing of the greateſt duties we owe to God, by oppreſſing the heart with a dead weight, and diſquieting the mind with groundleſs fears & variety of impertinent phancies, there's too much reaſon to apprehend, that as far as any one culpably gives way to this diſtemper, ſo far off he is from conquering the World, and ſo far he has to anſwer for all the ill conſequences, which are the conſtant attendants of this Indiſpoſition.

The ſame cenſure falls on thoſe, who are overcome by the Fourth Part. For though to be diligent in the Charge, which belongs to every one, in their reſpective qualities, be a great duty; yet to be ſo bent on theſe worldly Affairs, that the heart is wholy engag'd in them, that no Attention, Time or Thoughts can be allow'd to the care of the Soul and Chriſtian dutys; truly this is an extreme, which evidently ſhews a man to be overcome by the world; that he ſets Earth above Heaven and this world above God. For though Care in Worldly Profeſſions be recommended to a Chriſtian, yet when it riſes ſo high, as to exclude all Chriſtianity, it becomes very Criminal, and is as great a bar to Salvation, as a life of vice. Therefore we ſee in the Goſpel, though the trying of Oxen, ſeeing a Farm, and Marrying a Wife,

Wife, be things in themſelves very laudable; yet when the over-earneſt application to theſe, takes a man off his other greater duties, and generally hinders him from attending to God, they are highly provoking; and we muſt not wonder at the ſevere ſentence pronounc'd againſt them: *Not one of thoſe men ſhall taſt my Supper*: Hence many ſorts of Profeſſions become very dangerous and unlawful; becauſe they thus wholy involve a Man in the World, and take Heaven out of his ſight: and I queſtion not, as there are many caſes, wherein Father, Mother, Wife, Land &c. are to be forſaken; ſo likewiſe Profeſſions too, when they evidently hazard our Salvation, and put by all opportunities of providing for a better life. This may be truly ſaid of the moſt Perfect and Apoſtolical Profeſſion of Miſſioners or Paſtors. For when the great Charge of others Souls is the occaſion of neglecting their own, this is not according to the order of Charity, but contrary to it. For though perfect Charity be to be commended; yet how can Charity be perfect, as S. *Bernard* ſays to Pope *Eugenius*, if a Man excludes himſelf? *Quomodo autem plena, te excluſo?* And if this be truly ſaid in regard of this perfect State; with much

more reaſon is it to take place as to all other Callings and Profeſſions, which either in the whole or part are to be laid by, as they prove a general hinderance to Salvation. Thus then, as we deſire to belong to God, it is our duty to overcome the World, as to every part of it; and this is to be effected by the Victory of Faith. Grant then, O God of Mercy, that the Faith of thoſe Eternal Goods, thou haſt prepar'd for thoſe that love thee, may be ſo powerful in us, that the hopes of one day poſſeſſing them, may give us courage to contemn whatever is Temporal.

II *Sunday after* Eaſter.

EPISTLE.

1 Pet. 2. 21. to the end.

CHRIST Suffer'd for us, leaving us an examp'e, that we may follow his ſteps. The Rule is plain, and the obligation of our following it very expreſs: So that the Sufferings of Chriſt were not only undertaken by him, as our *Redeemer*; but likewiſe, as our *Maſter* and *Teacher*, to ſet us a Pattern of what our

our lives ought to be. Whilst therefore I consider the laborious and persecuted life of Christ, and his Cruel Death, it is not enough for me to give him Thanks for this most plentiful Redemption wrought by him; but I am to imprint a lively Idea of all his Sufferings deep in my Soul, and remember, these are to be my Model; and that if I offer not my self to accept whatever portion of them, he shall assign for me, I shall by no means be look'd on as a true Disciple of such a Master. 'Tis on this condition heaven is promis'd us: *Si tamen compatimur, ut & conglorificemur*: and whoever renounces the Condition, renounces the Promise; if we suffer not with him, we cannot reign with him.

Not that a Christian, by his Profession, is oblig'd to seek Reproaches, Disgraces or Prisons: 'tis generally enough to resolve stedily to walk on in the way of *Justice*, and that no flatteries or Fears shall oblige him to forsake it. The being true to such a Resolution will be generally attended with variety of Sufferings. Some will arise within, occasion'd from the continual war with Corrupt Inclinations, and the repeated assaults of a troublesom enemy: these will often give disquiet, and cause such uneasiness to a Sincere Soul, as to force it to break

forth sometimes into Sighs and Groans: others will fall heavy from abroad, since the asserting the cause of Justice, Innocence and Truth, cannot escape long, in this World of iniquity, without drawing great inconveniencies, and sometimes ruin on the Undertaker; and the higher degree he holds in the world, the more he is expos'd to greater mischiefs: it being very difficult to maintain any eminent Post in the world, without disguising truth and abandoning Justice on occasions; so that he that is resolute never to yield under any injustice, can hardly keep his ground, but must look to be overthrown, one manner or other.

The bearing patiently these evils, which thus occur, according to the general disposition of ones life, might go a great way to the making up a True Disciple of Christ; and 'tis in this part, the greatest number of those, who pretend to be his followers, are very considerably wanting. The Pious, and such as aim at Devotion, are often impatient, even to a great fault, under the importunity of Temptations, and at the frequent experience of their own weakness, in not standing their ground with that constancy, or not arriving to that degree of Peaceable and undisturb'd Devotion,

as

as they desire; upon which many times falling into great anxiety and disquiets, they indiscreetly add new faults to the former, when they should be, with great submission of Spirit, practising Humility and Patience, and in this Suffering follow their Master.

Others are still more to blame, who foreseeing any little occasion of Suffering, either through their own fault or accidentally, falling upon them, are ready with a Lye to ward it off and secure themselves; being so apprehensive of Suffering the least correction or inconvenience, that to keep themselves harmless, as they think, they defend themselves with Untruths, and draw on them God's anger, for the escaping that of Men. The natural unwillingness they have to Suffer, ever putting them on this unchristian artifice. Another, as unjustifiable as this, they make use of, when any other occasion of suffering presents it self; as when they are wrongfully accus'd, or blam'd without fault; for instead of quietly and patiently bearing this Humiliation, they generally fall into a passion, conceive an ill will against the Parties concern'd, and for reparation of their own Credit, are not satisfied till they have cast a blemish on their Neighbors. Thus though Meekness, Patience

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and Doing Good for evil, be what Christians pretend to, as the marks of their Profession, yet amongst how very few, are these found? For go into the crowd of them, and instead of their peaceably embracing the opportunities of Suffering, you'l hear Threats for threats, Passion for Passion, Cursing for Cursing; and Malice, Detraction, and ill Will, you'l scarce see any where without like returns.

In Spiritual affairs again 'tis much the same spirit governs; the natural aversion to Suffering so far influencing the greatest Part, that in those very exercises, in which 'tis intended they should Suffer, they frustrate the designs of the Church, and ever study to avoid it. Thus they are ingenious to find ways to Fast, without Fasting, that is, without almost any sort of Mortification: they do penance for their Sins, without penance, that is, without any of those penitential works, bearing the least proportion to their crimes. And as to other Duties of Restitution, Moderation, Temperance, Self-denial, Taking up the Cross, Charity, Purity, hating the world, &c. They have stretch'd these so far beyond all bounds, and made them conveniently bend so near the inclinations of flesh and blood, that truly a Christian life, as now

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in practice, is not a very laborious one; but admits of so much Excess, Gluttony-Over-reaching, Cozening, Animosities, Prodigalities, Pride, and all manner of Satisfactions and Liberties, that are not the very depth of Sin, that I think it has but little of the Gospel in it, and is so very easy and commodious, as to this world, that there's too much reason to suspect it.

And if, reflecting now upon the whole, we consider wherein it is we follow the example of our Lord in Peaceably Suffering, according to the Copy he has set us, truly, 'tis hard to find it: for how do we imitate him, whilst he voluntarily chose to Suffer, and we take all the care we can, to avoid it? How are we his Followers, whilst we take a way quite contrary to his example, using all possible endeavors to decline whatever is capable of Mortifying us; and whenever we are surpriz'd with it against our wills, we then render it useless and unchristian by passion or impatience? O Blessed Redeemer, how far is this from the true Character of thy Disciple! Thou hast suffer'd, to teach us to Suffer; and if thy Example has no effect on me, but I am still solicitous to gratify my own Inclinations, rather than be directed by thy Rule, how can I pretend to be thy

Follower?

Follower? And if reigning with thee, be promis'd upon condition of Suffering, is it not plain, by avoiding Suffering, I set Heaven at a greater distance from me?

Third Sunday after Easter.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet.* 2. 11. ends V. 18.

Brethren, I exhort you, as Strangers and Travellers, to abstain from carnal desires, which war against the Soul. The Direction and method of a Christian life, is fully compris'd in these two words of *Strangers* and *Travellers*, in both which the Apostle informs us, that we are not of this world, that we belong to another; that as long as we are in this world, we ought to consider it as a Strange Country, and that, as Travellers, we are only going through it. As therefore Strangers are not allow'd to purchase in a foreign Country, nor settle an inheritance there; as Travellers stop not on their Journey, but only to inform themselves of the neareſt and safeſt way home: they march diligently, whilst 'tis day, and for Rest and Nourishment,

ment, they only take, what is necessary to enable them to perform their Journey: If they are revil'd or affronted on their way, they go on still, make a Jest of it, & let no sort of anger or ill will seize their Spirits, nor think in the least of any revenge: if they see what delights them, whether as to Houses, Sports, Company, Entertainments, &c. these raise some pleasing thoughts indeed, and though they may stop to cast a passing eye, yet they go on still, not daring to take part in these diversions, lest thus hindred, they should not reach their home. Thus their main concern is ever to advance, and to deny themselves every thing, that may either stop or clog them in the way. If it rains or blows, they go on with patience thro' it, hoping it will soon give over: if the ways are uneasie, heavy or deep, they march on still, hoping before long, the ways will mend.

Oh, that we could thus go thro' this world, and ever esteem our Selves no otherwise than Srangers or Travellers: how would this put us upon passing by whatever is dangerous or hurtful to us, and never let us stop so easily at what delights, without reflecting, how far such amusements may hinder us from ever seeing our journeys end? How should we pass by many inconveniencies without

concern

Concern, and be careful never to burthen our selves with so much business of the Inn, as to forget, that we have farther still to go? Heaven is our Country, and as we are Christians, 'tis thither we pretend. Art thou now going on, Dear Christain? Or art thou at a stand? or go'st thou backward? If Business hinders thee, remember, the great business of one, that's on the way, is to be going on: there are many things thou wouldst willingly be doing on a Journey, but only thou canst not stay: The business, that hinders thee from going to Heaven, is not thine, and must either be laid aside, or the concern of it must be lessen'd. If Troubles hinder thee, learn to manage them right, and they'l help thee forward. If it be Sloth that hinders, Spur on the beast. But if it be thy Pleasures and Passions; these must necessarily be avoided and reform'd. I *exhort you to abstain from Carnal Desires, which war against the Soul.* Every thing is Carnal, that keeps thee from God. Whatever it be, that is not thy Duty, or in order to it, is only to feed some Passion; and thou wilt soon discover, 'tis the corruption of thy heart, which withdrawing thee from God, puts thee upon seeking other satisfactions out of him. And all these generally war against the Soul; for

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the Soul being design'd for an inheritance above and the Possession of an Eternal Good, all things created are much beneath that End, and all affections to them must greatly prejudice the Soul; the stronger these are, the more they weaken the Desires of Heaven; they stop the Christian on his way, make him in love with his Inn and cause an unwillingness to leave it; and is not this injurious to his great concern; whilst as the love of the world grows in him, so in proportion is diminish'd the Love of God? The Heart of man is very streight; Affections of no kind can rise there to any degree, but it must necessarily be to the less'ning of some others: and 'tis thus the Wicked and even Unwary Christians, in their pilgrimage below, come, by degrees, to forget they are Strangers and Travellers here.

Another caution the Apostle gives to as many as are on this journey; that is, To edify all by good Example and Holy Conversation. For this is a Duty Common to every Christian. To be so watchful in all their actions, as to do nothing, that may offend or Scandalize their neighbor: it being impossible there should be true Charity, where one prefers his own particular Satisfaction before the Salvation of others: Salvation,

I say; for tho' there be no fault in me, when some, thro' a disposition notoriously unjust, are scandaliz'd at actions truly good and beneficial to my Soul: yet there can be no excuse for those, who yielding to the violence of their own Desires, live in the continual practice of great disorders, and such liberties, which give sufficient grounds of offence to others, and make strangers blaspheme that Church, whose Members they are, as guilty of encouraging those vices which they see practis'd by such as belong to it. In this number must be included all those, who culpably live in the ill habit of Cursing, Swearing, Lying, Drinking, Covetousness or Cheating; such as use immodest Discourses or Actions, such as give themselves to Passion, Revenge, or Backbiting, who thro' carelessness neglect their Families, thro' prodigality or vain expences expose them to ruin, and thro' a life of idleness, betray a want of application to the Means of Bliss: In fine, all those, whose lives run counter to their Profession, who answer not the obligations of their State or Charge, whether Ecclesiastic, or Civil: all these with infinit others, if not reform'd, will find no place for excuse; but must be condemn'd as enemys to themselves, in thus evidently hazarding their eternal welfare; to their Neighbors

bors, in giving them Scandal and ill Example; and to their Church, in giving juſt occaſion to Strangers to revile and blaſpheme it. If theſe could but frame a true idea of their own State, and ſee, how many Souls are defil'd with ſin, how many lie buried in Hell, drawn into this ſtate of miſery thro' their ill example: if they could ſee how many have been diſcourag'd from ſeeking the Truth, and quite put out of the way, by the Scandal of their liberties: if they could hear, how many blaſphemies are caſt out againſt God's Church, occaſion'd by their looſe and unexemplar lives: this proſpect would either oblige them to reform their ways, by entring into the rigours of Penance, or if obſtinate in their Sin, caſt them into deſpair: For truly, it is accompanied with ſo many dreadful conſequences, if conſider'd in all its branches, into which it unhappily ſpreads it ſelf, that it muſt needs terrify a Chriſtian, to think, how many Souls he muſt give an account of beſides his own; and when he comes to reflect, the part he has acted in this life, has been that of devils, in ſuggeſting and propagating ſin, and betraying Souls to Hell, it muſt be a very powerful Grace to perſerve him from making this concluſion; That his crime having a reſemblance with the Devils, muſt certainly be

be as unpardonable as theirs. Look, O God of mercy, on these unhappy Christians, and by the effect of thy Grace, reclaim them from their evil ways; preserve them from all despair; and turn their feet into the ways of thy Commandments. Pardon us all our Sins, and forgive all those, who have been misled by our ill Example. Direct our lives in the paths of Moderation and Prudence, that we may edify every Neighbor, and thus contribute to the removing that Scandal, which other's Vices and Indiscretion have drawn upon us.

IV. *Sunday after* Easter.

EPISTLE.

St. *James* C. 1. V. 17. ends V. 21.

BE *slow to anger.* The Apostle having shewn, that every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, prescribes afterwards some means, proper to dispose our Souls, that those gifts may not be lost on us, but that they may abundantly bring forth fruit in due season: and amongst some others, is that set down

down now mention'd; That we ſhould be *ſlow to anger:* and the reaſon he gives, is, Becauſe *the anger of Man works not the Juſtice of God.* In which words he in ſhort, but fully deſcribes the miſchievous effects of this Paſſion: letting us know, that when this has once ſeized the heart, it renders it unfit for complying with the laws of God, and diſcharging thoſe great duties he exacts from us. For the moſt immediate effect it has upon us, is to caſt a blind upon, or at leaſt diſturb, our Reaſon; ſo that at that time, it is not capable of diſcerning or judging any thing aright: and when the Eye, that ſhould direct us, is thus clouded, is it not to be expected, that whatever elſe depends on its conduct, ſhould be out of order? How can a Man ſhoot at a mark, when he has a cloud of duſt or ſmoke before him? It can be nothing but raſhneſs to undertake it. This is our caſe; for Paſſion is both duſt and ſmoke to our Reaſon; and while all our other Faculties are of their Nature blind, and Reaſon, that is to guide them, is become blind too; all we do then, can be little better than the blind leading the blind, and this is not walking on in the way of Duty or Precept, but running into the ditch,

And when Reason is once thus indispos'd, that it is not capable of discerning, it is likewise uncapable of Governing too: and what then become of all those violent Passions, that are under its charge? they all break loose; then *Fears* and *Jealousies, Supicions, Ill will, Hatred, Malice, Revenge*, with all the rest, make their attempts, and like a *Mob* in a disorder'd Government, pretend to counsel, direct and rule; and that, amongst them, which most favours Constitution or Convenience, and counterfeits Reason best, ever gets the reins: So that at that time a Man is not under the Government of Reason, but of Fear, Hatred, or some other Passion: and what possibility of a Christian acting then according to Duty, when he is not in a condition of acting according to Reason? Hence the effects of anger become prejudicial to all States.

I. To Christians, as to their Devotions; they being very much indispos'd for Prayers, Meditation, Reading or going to the Sacraments, as long as their minds are disturb'd with this Passion: for these Duties requiring a great Serenity and Calm of Spirit, can never be perform'd well in a Storm: for tho' they may use some weak endeavours in order to raise their thoughts to God: yet the aggrievance, whatever it be, so naturally

rally and violently returns, that it soon takes up the Heart, to the exclusion of all that is good; and then instead of Prayer, there's nothing but a gathering of dark clouds, ready to break forth into storms and thunder. They are alike then unfit for all good works, as of *Charity*, &c. for the mind being gall'd, every thing then frets it, and they cannot be willing or easie in admitting any proposals.

II. 'Tis prejudicial to them in the ordering the affairs of the Soul: for tho' the anger be such, which seems most justifiable, as occasion'd from the displeasure of their own Sins, Infirmities or Relapses; yet once it comes to cause an Anxiety, Disquiet, Melancholy or Fretfulness within them, they are then unfit for framing any true judgment of themselves, or determining, what method is most expedient for them, 'tis then they are in danger of being deluded by an indiscreet Zeal, into some rash or violent undertaking; or if it happens upon a Melancholy or Frightful temper, to sink into all manner of dejection, be ready to give all over for lost, and conclude, that Praying, and all the endeavours of amendment, are to no purpose: thus they are in danger of running out of the way, on one side or the other. And

therefore

therefore are ſtrictly oblig'd to adhere to ſome prudent and experienc'd Director, thus to eſcape the danger of being miſled by themſelves; being at that time ſo expos'd to miſtakes, that however poſitive they may ſeem in their own thoughts, they may yet generally ſuſpect themſelves, and even conclude they are in the wrong: it being not then their Reaſon that directs, but *Paſſion* or *Fear*, both which are very unſafe Guides, ſuch as a Wiſe Man ought not to truſt a very inconſiderable affair to, much leſs his Soul.

III. It has its ill effects in treating of matters of Religion: For when a perſon undertakes to be Advocate for Truth, and either by the peeviſh prejudice, obſtinacy, or falſe charges of an Adverſary, is by degrees warm'd into a Paſſion, he then certainly injures the cauſe he undertakes to defend; there being nothing that renders a Man more averſe to Truth, than to hear it preſs'd with *violence* and *anger*; theſe being ſufficient even to change a well inclin'd perſon into a profeſs'd enemy; there being very few, who ſeem willing to be inform'd, but have too much pride to own themſelves overcome; and therefore this rough method ſeems nothing leſs than a Temptation to draw Men into the

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ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, by provoking them to oppugn the known Truth. Meekneſs is a neceſſary qualification of an Apoſtle, 'tis one of the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; thoſe who undertake the cauſe of Truth without this, fight not with the Arms of Chriſt or his Holy Spirit; and cannot expect a bleſſing from above; ſince tho' our Redeemer ſending his Apoſtles abroad with the mildneſs of Sheep, promis'd to be with them; yet they can claim nothing of this, who laying by the Sheep, are turn'd into Wolves.

IV. 'Tis pernicious to all *Parents*, *Maſters* and *Superiors* in regard of ſuch, as are under their charge: for tho' theſe have a right to reprehend and correct, when a juſt occaſion requires it, and the omiſſion of this, is a great fault, often attended with very ill conſequences: yet certainly St. *Tereſa*'s advice, of *Never reprehending any one in anger*, ought to be the rule of their Practice, if they deſire to ſee any fruits of their Correction: for they that reprove others in a Paſſion, do it generally to ſatisfie themſelves, and in compliance with their own Impatience; and generally betray ſo great a weakneſs, in the doing it with ſo much of unkindneſs, ill will, and even exceeding

ding the bounds of Truth and Justice, that 'tis ever likely to produce much greater effects of Passion, Stubbornness and Contempt, than any thoughts of amendment. Furious or Passionate Correction is therefore carefully to be avoided by those, who have others under their care, if, like good Christians, they desire to benefit those recommended to them; and cure the evils, to which they are subject.

But if avoiding this excess, they fall into another degree of this Passion, which is, of being ever uneasie, out of humour, ready to fret and quarrel upon every trivial occasion, this is a less noisy evil, but not less pernicious than the former; and I fear, has as many degrees of madness in it. It makes Parents and Masters unfit for all those purposes, to which their State calls them; and causes so great uneasiness in all under their care, that truly there can be no comfort in a Family, where this Canker is ever gnawing at the Breast of the Superiors, which is not only a disturbance to them, but likewise to all that belong to them: upon which consideration the guilt of many sins must necessarily be charg'd on it; And I am apt to think, amongst the many occasions given to young people of being

being disobedient, of taking ill courses, of unhappily disposing of themselves both to their disadvantage and discredit, is the uneasiness they find at home under the Government of Humoursome, Peevish, and Jealous Parents, from which the desire of being deliver'd, puts them upon very rash and unjustifiable methods. I fear it causes not less mischief betwixt Man and Wife.

Now all manner of Passion being of so pernicious a temper, the Apostle had great reason to command us, to be slow to anger, as not working the Justice of God, and it ought to be our daily care to remedy, whatever degree of it we observe in our selves. It is the occasion of many evils, and because hard to be master'd, requires a watchful Eye and laborious Hand. The Enemy and a corrupt Nature is ever suggesting arguments to make it appear reasonable: but upon reflection, we have too great reason to suspect it: since the reasons we have are too much in favour of our Inclination and Impatience.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

EPISTLE.

St. *James* C. 1. V. 22. ends V. 27.

BE *Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only.* A good Christian then, in the first place, ought to be a Hearer of the Word, that is, ought to be ever diligent, willing and ready to be inform'd or put in mind of his Duty, whether by Hearing or Reading, at all fit opportunities: because the Word of God thus heard or read, is the daily food and nourishment of our Souls: 'tis what we so often pray for in the *Our Father*, when we say; *Give us this day our daily bread:* this being a great part of the bread of Life, ever necessary for the support of our Spiritual Being: Great numbers there are, that stand in need of it for their instruction, as not having yet a sufficient knowledge of their Christian Duties, necessary for Salvation: and as great numbers there are, who knowing their Duties, are in want still of being often

often put in mind of them, that so they may practise what they know: for Reading and Hearing is not always to have something new propos'd to us, but to revive and quicken that knowledge we already have; 'tis to make us reflect on what we know. For what with conversing with the World, both as to its Necessities, Conveniencies and Vanities, and what with hearkning too much to our own inclinations, our minds are generally so taken up with Worldly, Vain, Unprofitable, if not Sinful Thoughts, that truly the knowledge we have of God, and our Duty lies generally oppres's'd and smother'd under heaps of either weighty or empty trifles; and the concern of these appears so very pressing and important, that all Motives to good are too much hid from our Eyes, grow by degrees so weak and cold, that, whatever it be in speculation, 'tis certain in practice, Earth is above Heaven in our Hearts, and the concern of Salvation gives place to other business: and thus in time, the World, Vanity or Sin gains possession of our Souls, if by frequent Hearing or Reading what is good, we are not daily spur'd forward to our Duty, if thus we revive not the maxims of the Gospel in our Hearts, and labour

not to keep that ground, which is due to God in our Souls. Upon which consideration, we are oblig'd to apply our ſelves often to theſe exerciſes, as we deſire to have an intereſt in God: for as the Scripture ſays, *He that is of God, hears the Words of God*: So St. *Auguſtine* declares; There's no more certain ſign of Predeſtination, than willingly to give ear to the Word of God. And the reaſon may be; Becauſe, as thoſe who live in Slavery or Baniſhment, are ever willing to hear of their own Countrey; and 'tis eaſie diſcovering of what Nation or Province every Man is, by the Satisfaction and Joy they expreſs in hearing it ſpoke of: So truly, thoſe Chriſtians, who find comfort in hearing of Heaven, and of the ſafeſt way of going to it, may hence ground ſome hopes, that 'tis the place they belong to: as thoſe, who delight to hear and read nothing, but of the World, its Vanities and Follies, may likewiſe hence gueſs at the temper of their Souls, and what place they belong o.

Hence it muſt be concluded a very laudable, if not a neceſſary practice for all Chriſtians, who have any ſort of leiſure, to give their Souls as daily an allowance of this Spiritual food, as they do

do of nourishment to their Bodies; by being constant in reading some good Book every day: as likewise for all such, as have young people under their Care, whether as Children, Scholars or Servants, to accustom them daily to this exercise; but especially on *Sundays* and *Holidays*, and in *Lent*, &c. and this in public or common, if it may be: that so those violent inclinations, which carry them to Levities, Vanities, and excessive Divertisements, may be thus corrected or moderated, by seasoning their minds with the frequent apprehension of more substantial goods, And where this is neglected, thro' their fault, who have the charge of them, I cannot but think, they offend in a matter of great Concern, and may one day find the guilt of it, in all its consequences, to be more weighty and terrible, than they generally apprehend.

Besides hearing the Word, we must be Doers also: for all Hearing and Reading being in order to the performing our Christian Duties, wherever this is not done, all the rest are but barren and fruitless exercises, such as are apt to delude Men into a Vanity of their own knowledge and a good opinion of themselves; but can never recommend them

to Almighty God, who requires not only leaves on the Trees in his Vineyard, but fruit also: So that Knowledge without Practice, can be no plea for the lessening faults, but comes in the end to be an encrease of Damnation. The benefit then of frequent Reading, must be by serious reflections on the method and conduct of our lives, to examine, how far we practise what we know, and by constant endeavours never cease, till, by degrees, we reform in our selves, what we observe contrary to the Maxims of Christian Discipline, of Justice and of Truth.

And for the more obvious Heads of this Examen, the Apostle seems in the first place, to put us upon enquiring, how we govern our Tongues: for that we are not to pretend either to the Truth of Religion in our Hearts, or Practice of it in our Lives, if this Member be not well regulated. In this point then we must be Doers of the Word; that is, have a careful watch on our selves, and suppress all those evils, which chiefly manifest themselves by the Tongue; as Anger, Hatred, Envy, Backbiting, Rash Judgments, Cursing, Swearing, Lying, and whatever provoking expressions, are apt to give disturbance

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to others; it being impossible to conceive the mischief our Words many times cause in others, in extinguishing Charity, and exciting variety of disordered Passions. Then to correct that prodigious lightness or rashness, in advancing Falsities, Uncertainties or Doubts, for Truths; not to assert a thing at a venture, for fear of being thought ignorant, which is often very prejudicial; but most especially, if it be in a matter relating to Conscience; such decisions serving only to settle some in a false peace, when disquiet of mind would be much more to their advantage; to put others on very indiscreet undertakings, and are often follow'd with variety of evils. These, with the many other disorders of this Member, are to be corrected; since they generally proceed from a corruption of the Heart; and where this is tolerated, there can be no truth of Piety or Religion.

Another point recommended by the Apostle here, is, to reflect, what our practice is, in regard of such as are in any affliction or distress: For this being a great Duty, we cannot pretend to be Doers of the Word, if we are wanting in it. To have no compassion for the afflicted, to study to avoid them, to con-

fider nothing of relieving them, to be harſh, ſharp and ſevere to them, is a ſort of Cruelty not conſiſtent with the Charity of the Goſpel: and therefore however diſagreeable to our temper it may be, to converſe with, hear and aſſiſt them, yet to overcome this uneaſineſs ſeems a neceſſary Mortification for all; that they may find a like Charity, if it ſhould come to be their turn to want it, and not to be confounded with the thoughts of their own hard-heartedneſs, when in their Spiritual afflictions, and laſt anguiſh of Death, they come to implore God's mercy.

Thus to read and hear the Word of God, and practiſe it in our lives, being our indiſpenſible Duties; we are ſeriouſly to apply our ſelves to both; Help us, O God, in this our obligation: let no ſloth be a hindrance; let not the World and its Snares be a diverſion to us: give a taſt to our Souls, that we may reliſh and delight in what is good; that ſo we may cheerfully hear and reſolutely perform whatever is thy Word to us.

Munday

Munday in Rogation-Week.

EPISTLE.

S. *James* C. 5. V. 16. ends V. 20.

THE *fervent prayer of the Juſt prevails much.* To comply with the deſign of the Church, we ought to meet in publick on theſe days, and there offer our Prayers to Almighty God, to obtain his bleſſing on the fruits of the earth, to preſerve us from all peſtilential diſtempers, and in the true ſpirit of humiliation and penance endeavor to prepare us for the approaching Solemnity of the Aſcenſion. We are ever in want of the Divine bleſſings, which are all to come to us from the hand of God; and it being his Will, not to diſpenſe them to us, but on the condition of our manifeſting our moſt earneſt deſires to him in Prayer, we are therefore, as we have a concern for our own intereſt, to be ever Solicitous in Praying to him. Now to Pray, as we ought, our firſt endeavors ought to be, by a ſincere repentance

and

and hearty contrition, to remove from our Souls, whatever is there of ſin, and we may apprehend to be an obſtacle to the Divine Goodneſs, and juſt motive of denying what we ask: for 'tis *the prayer of the Juſt prevails much*; and *Sinners he hears not*: hence we may gueſs at ſome reaſon of our praying ſo often in vain; becauſe we uſe a form of words, which being accompanied with only weak deſires of a Sinful heart, can never prevail on heaven to pour forth its bleſſings on us. Secondly, We muſt beg of God, to Teach us how to pray: And this we ought to ask all our lives: becauſe we have many ſeeming Neceſſities and falſe wants, which ought not to be the Subject of our prayers; we cannot tell, what chiefly we are to demand; on what we are to build our aſſurance, or with what diſpoſitions we are to make them. We truly are ingorant, what is good for our ſelves, and therefore, there are but few things, we can deſire in particular; and however importune we may be, according to the apprehenſions of nature; yet this ought ever to be accompanied with this unalterable reſolution, of Submitting to whatever Almighty God knows beſt for us, and wholy ſurren-

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dring our ſelves to his conduct. Thirdly, We ought to pray with Perſeverance: that as the Bleſſings of God are infinitly valuable, ſo we may expreſs the value we have for them, by our fervent deſires, and not being tired in our prayers. Nothing ſtops the divine Bounty ſo much as the indifferency we have for his Graces: and where do's this more evidently appear, than in our impatience and want of perſeverance in praying, ſince, we muſt either believe, his bleſſings are not worth ſo much Soliciting, which is a Contempt; or elſe, that God is not merciful enough to grant our requeſt, which is a degree of Infidelity? He that prays then, ought to begin with a reſolution of never being tired; and he will ſoon diſcover the good effect of his praying: he will perceive it a great bleſſing, to live ever with this dependance on God; and that 'tis no ſmall mercy to obtain a Perſeverance in this humble ſtate of Praying and Begging, which ought to be the condition of all men during this life. He then, that is ever ſenſible of his own poverty and miſery, ſo as daily to aſk for relief, muſt not complain of not obtaining what he aſks, ſince in this he has obtain'd a great deal.

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He must leave it to God either to refuse or delay what he asks; since all this in him may be for our greater good, to raise us to a more fervent devotion, to make us pray with more Submission and Perseverance. He is ever calling upon us, to correct our tepidity and coldness, to Submit to his orders, to humble our selves under his powerful hand, and persevere in prayer. Now the denials or delays he makes to our Requests may be very advantageous to this end, if we use them as we ought; not rashly pretending to devine what are the intentions of God, but sincerely examining, if there be any thing in us, that may justly prevent the effect of our Prayers. If we can discover nothing; we may then compose our Minds, with the Thoughts, That 'tis likely a Spiritual prosperity might be hurtful to us; that we are not capable to bear it: that God entrusts not his Gifts to us, because he sees us dispos'd to abuse them. He knows our weaknesses, and we know them not; he sees our darkness, and we see it not. What can we then do better, than wholy surrender our selves to his disposal, and regulate our selves by the declaration he has made of his Will, in requiring us to pray always, and not be discourag'd?

This

This is the way he has ſhewn us, and and there's no queſtion, but the going on in this way with reſolution and patience, will lead to life everlaſting.

And tho' our fears may ſuggeſt to us, that our Prayers are without ſucceſs, becauſe of the daily imperfections, to which we are ſubject, and from which we often deſire to be deliver'd; yet in reality, this is no evidence; but rather a temptation of the Enemy to diſcourage us from our Devotion. For may it not be the effect of our Prayers, that we are exempt from many Crimes, which others commit? May it not be beneficial to us, to be preſerv'd in a ſtate of Humility? May not our Pride ſtand in need of ſuch a counterpoiſe? Who knows, but if we ſaw nothing, but virtue in us, we might be dangerouſly carried away with Pride and Preſumption, which are Sins moſt deteſtable to God? Wherefore I cannot but think, there are ſome Perſons, whom God hears, in ſeeming not to hear them; for tho' they are not heard, as to their particular Imperfections, againſt which they pray; yet he hears them, in keeping them Humble, which is truly the Foundation of a Chriſtian Life, and ought to be the Principal End of their Prayers. Our buſineſs,

is

is to be ever constant in our Prayers, still endeavouring to correct all our Defects; but we are to leave to Almighty God the Manner, in which he will please to hear us, whether it be in remedying our Failings, or humbling us by them.

And tho' it may seem inconsistent, to have patience with our own Weaknesses, and at the same time sincerely endeavour to amend them; since we cannot quietly suffer what we hate; yet truly it is not so; there being no greater hindrance to our Amendment, than our Impatience under the evils we desire to amend. He that holds out with patience, is more master of himself; is truly Humble at the sight of his own Weakness, and being thus compos'd, labours with greater Application, and prays with more Fervour: Whilst he that anxiously disquiets himself at his Relapses, has Pride for the ground of his Disquiet, as generally thinking, he has Strength enough to hold out under such Trials, and by his interior Disturbance, is render'd uncapable of truly watching over himself, and taking that pains, necessary for his Recovery: For his whole Thoughts being taken up in the Consideration of his now past Faults, he gives no attention to his present Circumstances, and thus ever looking

looking back, he is hindred from going forward, and making any advance in Virtue. Grant me, O God, the true Spirit of Prayer, grant me Attention, Fervour and Perseverance; let no thoughts of my own Failings, nor indiscreet Fears, ever discourage me from this Duty; but hear me in what manner thou wilt; for I resolve to pray always.

Ascension-Day.

LESSON.

Acts C. 1. V. 1. ends V. 11.

HE *was taken up into Heaven.* It was forty days after his Resurrection, Christ ascended into Heaven: taking this time, by his frequent Apparitions, to Confirm his Apostles in the Belief of his Resurrection, and give them Instructions for the well performing that great Charge, he had recommended to them, of Preaching his Gospel. For this End he delay'd his entrance into Heaven, till this Day, and put off, as it were,

were, his taking possession of Bliss. Strange violence to his State of Glory for our Good! But a good Lesson to all those, who have Care of Souls, to encourage them to renounce all private Conveniencies and Intereſt, for the Benefit of their Flock; and not only to appear to them, but to labour in directing, comforting and instructing them; and instructing them too, as he did his Apostles, as here expreſs'd, *v.* 2. that is, by the *Holy Ghost*. For if the Son of God teaches not, but by the Holy Spirit, must it not be a great Presumption, for Men to teach their own private thoughts? The Doctrin of Pastors ought to be a Doctrin of Salvation; and whence can this come, but from that Fountain of Life the Spirit of God? Where there is no assurance of this Holy Spirit residing or assisting, there can be no assurance of Truth or Salvation from such Teachers; whilst all private Sentiments are only from the Spirit of Man; and the more positively they are urg'd, they have so much more, not of God, but of Pride to support them. 'Tis the Spirit of God unites divided People into One Faith; but the Spirit of Man divides People otherwise United, into many Faiths: And whatever division there is in the World, it generally

generally ariſes from this root; eſpecially where Natural Abilities and Learning raiſing Men to a good Opinion of themſelves, give them confidence of aſſerting their own private Thoughts for Certainties and Infallible Truths.

'Tis this Preſumption of Human Spirit is confounded in this laſt Inſtruction given perſonally by Chriſt to Men: Where firſt the Apoſtles enquiring of Chriſt, *If at that time the Kingdom of Iſrael ſhould be reſtor'd?* Plainly demonſtrates, there can be no knowledge or certainty of things belonging to God, but what comes from God: It can't be imagin'd, but they had reaſons enough (accordiug to the common way) to reſolve within their own Thoughts, what they aſk'd of him; but they had Humility enough to diſtruſt their own reaſoning, in a Point ſo much above them, and to advance nothing for Truth, but what was deliver'd to them by that Truth, which could not err: And ſince he was not pleas'd to Reveal it, therefore you hear no more of their pretending to the Knowledge of it. Happy the Appoſtles, who, in their Teaching, are directed by ſuch a Maſter, and who conclude, they know no farther, than they know from him.

Then

Then Christ's answer confirms the same; *'Tis not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father has reserv'd in his own power.* The knowledge of the Apostles is restrain'd to those particulars, which God reveals to them; and how then, in Divine matters, can the knowledge of other Men go beyond this? It cannot: and therefore however undiscerning Men may be prevail'd on to assent to points thus unauthentically deliver'd, and call it *Faith* or *Believing*; yet certainly it can be no more than an *Opinion* or *Persuasion*, a *Human Faith*, and not *Divine*; since it is not a Truth reveal'd by the Father; but set up for such by the Presumption of Men: and tho' the adhesion to it, be with an assurance, even like Divine; yet since it is not founded on sufficient Motives, it is in reality nothing better than Rashness, Obstinacy or Positiveness.

Thus ought the assurance, as to the truth of things above us, be confin'd to the Revelation of the Spirit of God; and this being above all other security, leaves no place for doubt; but brings rest with it to every Soul, that receives it. There may be many other things however, which Curiosity may put Men upon enquiring after; and which give great disquiet

disquiet and uneasiness to such as are Solicitous in this Search. But all this is unreasonable; because all those things, which God has been pleas'd not to manifest to Man, Man should be pleas'd, in having them hid from him. For the Spirit of a Christian, is the Spirit of a profound Humility under the power of God. It is content with the knowledge of its Duty, and with the assurance of those truths, which God has reveal'd; but it is far from searching into the Counsels of the Almighty, or unprofitably enquiring into what he has no need to know. A Christian's Duty is to obey, and this is the subject of his Study. He makes a general preparation to submit to all the Divine Orders without exception: and the less he knows, the more general is his preparation, and his submission the more perfect. He knows the Spirit of Curiosity, and the Solicitude of a seeking temper is a very great obstacle to a Christian life; for while the Soul spends it self in eager enquiries, it gives the less attention to the exact discharge of its Duties: it is very narrow; and cannot attend to variety of Objects: and therefore ignorance of such things, as we are not to know, is no reflection or disadvantage at all.

This

This was part of the reproof given this day to the Apostles; *Why stand you gazing up to Heaven?* They were earnestly looking after their Master, and being reprehended for it, as an unprofitable action, they are directed to the practice of their Duty, and commanded to prepare for his second coming, as Judge. All enquiring into the Counsels of God, is standing to gaze up to Heaven; 'tis truly to be at a stand; 'tis to spend those endeavours in useless and uncertain Speculation, which ought to be employ'd in practical Duties, and seriously preparing for the last account; We have all a great task on our hands, as to this particular: and while we contemplate this day our Redeemer Ascending; if we did but reflect, how indispos'd, we are to follow him in that way to Bliss; how much we have of Earth, Corruption, Self-love, Sloth, Sensuality and the World to overcome, before we can be in any tolerable degree prepar'd for that Journey; we should soon perceive, our business here, ought not to be gazing up to Heaven in needless enquiries, but setting our hands to the work, in constant endeavours to master our selves, and advance in all those great Duties, Almighty God requires from us.

Blessed

Blessed therefore be thy Holy Name, O Jesus, who providing us a Church, assisted by the Holy Spirit, to direct us in all saving Truths, without danger of erring, hast thus wisely cut off all occasion of curious and useless enquiries, and deliver'd us from the uneasiness of being ever seeking: Grant we may so make use of this Blessing, that resting securely on the promise of thy Spirit, we may employ our whole endeavours in no other seeking, than in seeking to love and serve thee: and thus may we hope one day to follow thee, and partake, tho' unworthy, of thy Glory.

Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet.* 4. C. V. 7. ends V. 11.

THat God may be *honour'd in all things, thro Christ Jesus.* The end, for which Man was created, was that God might be honour'd by him: if then we

ſo live, that we are ever Solicitous to honour God, in what we do, we anſwer the end of our Being; and may hope at our departure hence, to hear that happy welcom; *Well done, Good and Faithful Servant*; as having been Juſt and Faithful to all thoſe purpoſes, for which we receiv'd our Being But if we live on, in a conſtant Solicitude of accompliſhing our own private deſigns, relating to this World, but under a general careleſneſs of referring what we do to God, and a neglect of his honour; is it not to be fear'd, that as in this we wholly deviate from that end, for which we came into this World, ſo, in going out of it, we ſhall miſs that Poſſeſſion of our laſt end, which is to be obtain'd by no other way, than *Honouring God in all things, through Jeſus Chriſt*? The caſe is very evident, that as God is in himſelf the firſt and univerſal Mover; ſo he ought to be in us, the firſt Mover of all we do; that is to ſay, we ought to do nothing, but becauſe it is his Will we ſhould do it; and thus we make him the beginning of all our Actions: and becauſe he is and ought to be our laſt end; therefore 'tis our obligation, to refer always to his Honour, what we begin in his Name; thus he will be to us,

Alpha

Alpha and *Omega*, our Beginning and End, and thus he will be honour'd in all things thro' Chriſt Jeſus.

According to this Rule, we ought to act nothing, but as Commiſſion'd from God, by his Order and Authority, and for the Intereſt of his Name: and in this, Chriſtians are particularly to diſtinguiſh themſelves from Infidels, and thoſe that know not God. So that, while theſe proceed in all they do, by private Motives of Intereſt, Senſe or Self-love, they eat and drink to pleaſe themſelves; they follow Company and Diverſion, to gratify their Inclination; they are induſtrious in their Calling, to encreaſe their Stock, in compliance with their own covetous Deſires; they take many Liberties to ſatisfy their Senſes; and thus in all things are directed by no other Motives than of Convenience, Senſuality and Self-love: A Chriſtian ought to take the riſe of all his Actions ſome degrees higher, and ever begin from God: ſo that, in many things, doing the very ſame a Heathen do's, yet doing them, not principally like him, to ſatisfy himſelf, but becauſe God has been pleas'd to require it of him; hence all ſuch his Actions become Chriſtian and Divine; whilſt the others,

having no other beginning or end of what they do, but themſelves, in this proceed not as belonging to God, and their Actions are not Chriſtian, but only Natural. 'Twas certainly this thought *David* had in his Mind, when he cry'd out: *Oculi mei ſemper ad Dominum. My Eyes are always upon our Lord*; as having God always in his ſight; and deſiring to begin all things in his Name, and end all to his Honour.

By this Method a Chriſtian has every moment an opportunity in his hands of acting like a Chriſtian, in ſerving and honouring God; ſince 'tis not only thoſe more Select Actions of Praying, Faſts, and Alms, of Viſiting the Sick, Inſtructing the Ignorant, Comforting the Afflicted, and ſuch like, that may be thus begun and ended; but every particular Action, perform'd the whole Day, in relation even to the meaneſt Offices, whether in the Shop, the Kitchin, the Street, the Field, the Priſon, or the Gally; all may be done in his Name, and offer'd to his Honour; and thus may become a Sacrifice of Juſtice to him, as being perform'd to ſatisfy that Duty, which belongs to every one in their reſpective Profeſſions: As therefore at the End of every *Pſalm*, we ſay a *Gloria Patri*:

tri: So, if at the end of every Action, we concluded with the like Hymn of Praiſe, I queſtion not, but it would be an acceptable Oblation to him, who rewards not only thoſe, who offer their Treaſures, but alſo thoſe, who bring their Mites: 'Tis by this Method, ſuch as thro' ignorance, can't read; ſuch as, by a perpetual Toil and Slavery, can't have leiſure to pray; and ſuch as, thro' Pain, or Sickneſs, can't apply their Thoughts to any regular Devotion, may ſtill be in a good way of ſaving their Souls, by making all they do and ſuffer, a Sacrifice of Praiſe, by Conſecrating all to God, by Beginning every thing, becauſe 'tis his Will; and Offering all to him, becauſe all belongs to him. Thus in every Action there's Fidelity and Juſtice, and he that do's ſo is Faithful and Juſt.

Nay, I think, according to S. *Paul*'s Rule, *Rom.* 8. 16. this is the moſt aſſured means of diſcovering, whether we are truly the Children of God: for if *the Spirit be to give teſtimony to us* of this, we are to examin what Spirit it is, that moves us in all we do; and if we find there the Spirit of God referring and ordering all to his holy Will and his Glory, truly upon this Teſtimony we may lay a well-grounded hope, that we belong to him:

for then that Spirit is the life of our actions, by which they are all animated, and that life is of God. This conclusion may receive some evidence from the Spirit of the World: For, as when Men act upon no other motive, than of the the World, Sensuality, and the Flesh, 'tis plain their actions are Worldly, Sensual or Carnal; such are their Thoughts, their Words and the Endeavours they use; and the Spirit bears Testimony to them of it; because the Spirit, that moves them, is such: So that whatever it be they undertake, whether as to state of life, in Church or State; whether as to actions seemingly Religious, Pious or Charitable, they are nothing but Worldly, inasmuch as it is not the consideration of God's Honour determines them to action, but only the thought of their own Interest, Convenience or satisfaction. And thus, as this takes off from the value of the most Religious Duties, nay, so perverts their very nature, as to render them unprofitable, if not sinful; So there's no action, of it self so inconsiderable, but if undertaken in the Spirit of God, and perform'd to his Honour, upon this is sanctified, is truly Christian and available to the obtaining eternal happiness.

And

And this being a thing so very easie, especially in those, whose lives are regular, requiring no other labour or charge, than of a Thought, in raising up the Heart to God in the beginning and end of every thing they do, methinks 'tis pity so many actions should be lost for want of this, which, with this, God is ready to accept of and enter into the Book of Life. There are many, I hope, who live so seemingly Pious and Innocent, that the greatest part of what they do, is capable of being thus Sanctified; and yet for want of this care and good management, do so much out of custom, so much upon principles of nature, so much in compliance, for good Name and other private respects, that when the account is made up, I fear, they'll come very short of what they expect. *Cogitavi vias meas.* We are then to think of what we do, and for whom we do it; we are ever to act upon a motive of Duty or Compliance with the Will of God, that so after a regular life, we may not only find, that we have been naturally or morally good, that is, good Philosophers, but good upon better principles, that is, good Christians. And what more compendious way for this, than honouring God in all things thro' Christ Jesus? *Whit-*

Whit-Sunday.

LESSON.

Acts C. 2. V. 1. ends V. 11.

They were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost. The Apostles receiv'd not this Holy Spirit, but after a great preparation of Prayer, and Union in Christian Charity. Those Christians, who now expect a Blessing from the assistance of this Holy Spirit, if they have not already thus prepar'd their Souls, ought now diligently to apply themselves to these Holy Exercises, that so they may not pass over this great Solemnity, without the advantage the Church designs for them. For 'tis not to be expected this Divine Fire should enter into a Heart, which, thro' neglect, is yet chill and cold, & not at all warm'd with the fervor of Prayer: if it be wholy Worldly, and not rais'd above the Earth, how shall Heaven come and take its abode in it? And if there be any roots of Division or Uncharitableness, by which the Heart is exaspe-

exaſperated, or at leaſt, ſeparated from any Neighbour, how can the *Holy Ghoſt* find admittance there, who is the God of Charity, of Union and Peace? This cannot be; therefore the Heart is to be prepar'd; and according to the ordinary method, God requiring a kind of proportion between the Preparation and the Graces, for which we prepare; hence the Gift of the *Holy Ghoſt* being the moſt excellent of all Bleſſings, as the Apoſtles did, ſo we likewiſe ought to make the greateſt preparation for it. For truly, as the Myſtery of this day was to perfect Man's Redemption, ſo we may boldly ſay, if we partake not in the Bleſſings of it, all the work of Man's Redemption will be fruitleſs and wholy loſt on us.

For 'tis by the effect of this Holy Spirit we are to be Confirm'd in our Faith, be Patient under all troubles, Humble when provok'd, Meek when injur'd, be Peaceable with the Contentious, be Compaſſionate on the Diſtreſs'd, be never tir'd in doing any Duty, or Suffering whatever is our Portion; 'tis by this Holy Mover we are to be directed in all we undertake, be Wiſe in every Choice, be help't in our Devotion, be enflam'd with the Love of God, and ſupported in every obligation to our ſelves and our Neigh-

Neighbour. So that whether in time of Prosperity or Adversity, whether in Spiritual Comforts or Interior Darkness, whether in time of Temptation or Peace, there is not one step we can take aright, but as directed and mov'd by this Holy Spirit. These are some of its principal effects, necessary for our guidance to Eternal Life: And whoever is but so curious, as to make observation of what passes within himself, how many ways we are apt to be deluded, both by Fears and Hopes, by the World, Vanity and Self-love; how many dangers are about us, how uncertain we are in our Choice; how little we know what is truly good for us; how easily dejected, how falsly comforted, how insincere we are to our selves; how ignorant of our own ways; will soon conclude, that the assistance of the *Holy Ghost* is, every hour of our lives, necessary for us, and that we cannot possibly go on with any degree of security, but with the help of this Guide, this Master, this Light, this Comforter, this Strengthener, the Holy Spirit of God.

This Blessing we are to ask at this time, and so ask, that we may hope to obtain; since without it we must necessarily be miserable; we are to ask it for the whole year,

year, for every action of it, nay for our whole lives; Men and Women, old and young; for whilst we see the *Holy Ghost* came down, not only on the Apostles, but on the whole Congregation of both Sexes, to the number of an hundred and twenty Persons, we hence are taught, that, as all stand in need of it, so all are capable of receiving it, and therefore all ought earnestly to solicit for the obtaining it.

'Tis true, there being different degrees, in which we may partake of it, as one for the Apostles, another for the Disciples, another for the good Women and other Believers; therefore ought every one dispose themselves to receive such a proportion of it, as may be necessary for their State. If he that is in a publick employ should receive no more than the private person; if he that has the care of a Family, should partake only according to the measure of another, that has no such charge; if the Religious, the Priest and the Prelate, should receive only equal with the Layman; would not there be great failings in the administration of every respective Duty? whilst that measure of Grace being wanting, which is necessary for their charge, all is unavoidably expos'd to miscarriages; and who must answer for the consequences of them, but

but thoſe, who, thro' ſloth or other faults, have neglected to obtain that large proportion of the Holy Spirit, which was indiſpenſably neceſſary for their conduct? Hence I cannot but with grief conſider the raſhneſs of many Chriſtians, who with great induſtry are ſeeking employs of Charge and Truſt, or are in a way of being preferr'd to ſome Order or Dignity in the Church; but at the ſame time, reflect but little, whether they have that meaſure of Grace, neceſſary for ſuch an undertaking, and too often take but little care for the obtaining of it. If they have too evident an experience already of their own weakneſs, and of the want of the Holy Spirit in a degree fit for an employment of Leſſer concern, is it reaſonable they ſhould take on them yet greater Obligations, who have not been able to ſatisfie the leſs? There ſeems to be a certain Order in Grace, as well as in Nature; it is not perfected but by degrees; and there's ſcarce any one arrives to any ſort of Eminency, but it is preceded with very evident marks of the firſt Fruits of the Holy Spirit. If they have not ſcarce taſted of theſe, Is it not a preſumption in them at once to expect an overflow of it? Truly I cannot but fear, this forwardneſs of many, in engaging

gaging in things so much above their strength, and without suitable preparations of Grace, opens a large Gate for many disorders, not only in Church and State, but likewise in all other undertakings of lesser concern; for where success depends, as it does every where, on the Divine Assistance; there must be miscarriages, where Human Prudence is the Director and God left out. Let it be then the Devotion of this holy time, earnestly to implore the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to go before us, and accompany us in all, whatever we undertake; that he will be our Guide, our Comforter and Strength: and not only be so to us, but most particularly to all those, who are recomended to places of Dignity, on whose management depends the Welfare of Church or State.

Mundæ

Munday in Whitſun-Week.

LESSON.

Acts C. 10. V. 42. ends V, 48.

THey heard them ſpeaking in diverſ Tongues, and glorifying God. Amongſt the many wonderful effects of the *Holy Ghoſt*, the firſt and moſt remarkable was in the Tongue. 'Twas in this form he was pleas'd to deſcend; and deſcending thus, not only on the Apoſtles, but on the Diſciples, on the Women and other Believers, it proves, that the Tongues of all the Faithful of all States, ought to be influenc'd and directed by the Holy Spirit. But in the firſt place, the Apoſtles ſpeak in different Tongues, and all Nations hear them in their own Language. This being the day, wherein the Church was form'd; 'twas but juſt, all Tongues ſhould pay him homage, which were to be united in one Faith and Worſhip thro'out the World: Tongues were firſt multiplied, to confound the Pride of Men, to divide the Children of *Babylon*, and prevent the finiſhing their work: but now they are again multiplied in the Mouths of the Apoſtles, for a better end,

to

to draw Men to the Faith, to the Humility, and Union of the Body of Chriſt. The Apoſtles ſpeak in different Tongues, and in theſe tell their Succeſſors, they are to learn all Languages, that ſo like Saint *Paul*, *They may become all to all*, in being able to give aſſiſtance to their Flock, according to their different neceſſities. There's one ſort of Language requiſit to reprehend the faulty, another to correct the Inſolent, another to ſweeten the Furious, another to encourage the Dejected, another to ſoften the Obſtinate, another to quicken the ſlothful: One for thoſe above us, another for equals, another for inferiors. One for the ſoft temper, another for the rough: one for the Candid and Sincere, another for the Flatterer, the Pretender or Deſigner: One for the Miſtaken or Miſled, another for the Ignorant, another for the Affected and Obſtinate: Thus are Paſtors to ſpeak all Languages, to be enabled to diſcharge their Duty: it being for want of this skill, they fail many times in very conſiderable parts of it; whilſt their needs no other reaſon for their being often diſappointed in the fruits of their endeavours, than their not ſuiting their Diſcourſe, and ſpeaking the Language that is proper. Is it not often hence, that a ſinner, inſtead of being reclaim'd,

claim'd, is hardn'd; a Quarrel, inſtead of being made up, is inflam'd; a Penitent, inſtead of being encourag'd, is driven into deſpair; a Seeker, inſtead of being help'd, is put out of his way?

But how ſhall a Paſtor become thus qualified? Who ſhall inſtruct him in this art of Tongues? It can be none elſe, but that Holy Spirit, with which the Apoſtles were at this time inſpir'd from above; He that taught them, is the only Maſter for every Paſtor: *Diſponet ſermones ſuos in judicio*; 'tis by him they are to be directed, not only what they are to ſay, when brought before Magiſtates; but alſo in what manner to deliver themſelves, as the neceſſity of every one in particular ſhall require. With what care and ſolicitude then ought thoſe, who are preparing for this State, endeavor to obtain a large Portion of this Holy Spirit, who may ever aſſiſt them in the diſcharge of their great Duty, and without whom they can do nothing well? How ought thoſe, who have now this charge on them, when call'd to perform any part of their Function, never go about it, till they have firſt, in Heart or Words, implor'd this Divine Aſſiſtance, and ſincerely committed, whatever it be they undertake, to the conduct and management of the

Holy

Holy Ghoſt? This is the only way to ſucceed, and the ſureſt means of ſatisfying themſelves, that the truſting in their own ſtrength, has not been the occaſion of thoſe miſcarriages, they may ſomtimes meet with.

But are the Paſtors only to be thus directed? No: the Holy Ghoſt deſcending on the whole Multitude of Believers, both Women and Men, in form of Fiery Tongues, ſhews the Tongues of all ought to be directed by this divine Spirit. All, in their different degrees and ſtate of life, are to contribute, either to the planting or eſtabliſhing the Goſpel in the Hearts of others. The Practice of the World, 'tis true, is not ſo; for Worldly Men, mov'd by an ill Spirit, propagate and maintain a carnal and worldly Intereſt, contrary to that of God: this work has all thoſe for Labourers to carry it on, who by a practice of Lying, Detracting, Curſing, Swearing, or lewd Diſcourſes, give authority and confidence to others to do the like: who advance Arguments to commend a life of Idleneſs, of Vanity, of Eaſe and Pleaſure, and by their converſation communicate ſuch Principles of Liberty to others, which, like ill Seed, ſhoot forth in time into all manner of Irregularities. Theſe are Chriſtians, who promote an Intereſt, contrary to Chriſt and his Goſpel; who

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by word and Example recommend the Maxims of the World, and are very Instrumental in enlarging a Kingdom, which is not God's: And why? Because their Tongues are infected with Poyson and Corruption, which they industriously spread abroad; but are wholy unacquainted with God's Spirit, by whose power all these Motions to Evil ought to be carefully suppress'd. But there are other Select Christians, who sensible of the evils of the Tongue, and having a just regard of their own and Neighbour's eternal Good, diligently observe all its motions; and seeing how ready it is to run into all manner of Indiscretion, Rashness and Extravagancies, and engage others in their Sins, never fail daily to invoke the Holy Spirit to direct and rule it; and foresee no manner of Discourse, in which they are like to have a part, but, jealous of themselves, they heartily recommend it to God, on whose Holy Spirit, they depend. Thus, O God, are we entirely in thy Hands; as we cannot think a good thought without thee; so neither without thee can we speak aright. Help us then, O God, our Salvation, and send down thy Holy Spirit into our Hearts, and by his powerful Influence may we ever be directed in all we do or say: Correct the per-

perverſe Tongues of thoſe, whoſe Diſcourſe is Irreligion or Prophaneſs: Remove Curſing and Swearing from among thy People; and permit not Lying, Contention Biting and Detraction, any more to be the Language of thoſe, who pretend to follow thee: Heal all the evils of this unruly Member, for 'tis only thy Infinit Power muſt do it.

Tueſday in Whitſun-Week.

LESSON.

Acts C. 8. V. 14. ends V. 17.

THE *Holy Ghoſt had not deſcended on any of them* (of Samaria) *but they had only been baptiz'd in the Name of our Lord.* Thoſe, who are Baptiz'd, are oblig'd to profeſs the Faith of Chriſt and live as his Children; but becauſe the Duties of a Chriſtian, in doing good and avoiding evil, are very great, and require an inward ſtrength and vigor of mind for their juſt performance; therefore it is neceſſary, that Grace receiv'd in Baptiſm, whereby we are made the Children of God, ſhould

should be perfected and improv'd by the *Holy Ghost*; by whose invisible residence within us we may be Sanctified into his Temples, and be so enabled by that Spirit of Power and Strength, as of Childreni in Christianity, to become perfect Men, and be fitted for every Duty, that belongs to a Soldier of Christ. For 'tis to the quality of his Soldiers we are engaged in the Sacrament of Confirmation: 'tis the obligation of this Profession we ought to renew at this Holy time; representing, with sorrow, to Almighty God, all our past weaknesses and want of Resolution in asserting his Cause; imploring fresh supplies of his Grace for the recovery of what ground has been lost, and offering our selves now to whatever difficulties or pains shall be necessary for the maintaining the interest of his Honour or Laws. This ought to be a great part of our business in this present Solemnity; it being truly the want of this Grace, that makes us so often false to our Cause, faithless to our Lord, and expose our selves to those miscarriages, which, if not prevented, will one day be follow'd with our ruin. 'Tis Cowardise, Fear, or Shame, are the general occasion of our daily sins, whilst to the importunity of an Enemy, and not his force, we easily yield; whilst a little un-

uneasiness shews how very little our Patience is; whilst only Human respects and compliance prevail on us to be Deserters and take part with the World or Devil, against whom we have lifted our selves under Christ's Standard.

Reflect but on the failings of one day: Why is it, that a hasty word, a small reproof, a reflection, the being contradicted, and generally such inconsiderable provocations, so easily raise a disturbance and passion amongst Christians? Is there not a strange Cowardise in this, that professing themselves Christ's Soldiers, they can bear so very little for his sake; but on such trivial occasions, are drawn from their Duty, and by growing angry and passionate, rebel against his Commands? If there were but a spark of that true Courage, such as is inspir'd by the *Holy Ghost*, a Christian Heart would pass by all such provocations unmov'd, and not lose his ground for such weak attempts: what a kind of Soldier is that, who upon the least noise or disturbance, quits his Post? This it is thou dost, who art a pretender to the Christian Warfare, who having undertaken to stand all Assaults under the covert of Patience, Humility and Meekness, and thus fight the Battels of Christ; upon every Allarm throw'st

throw'st away thy Arms, and push'd on not with God's Spirit, but with Pride, Obstinacy and Contention, fightest now, not his, but thy own Cause with the Arms of Flesh, of Animosity and Choler.

Why is it again, Christians so easily yield to the solicitations of the Senses, of corrupt Nature or Company? 'Tis plain, the Profession made in Baptism, obliges us to renounce all these; and by the Engagements made in Confirmation, we are bound, with constancy and courage, to withstand their Assaults: and what is the yielding to them, as often as we do it, but a great effect of Cowardice, of some Fear or Shame; as not holding out under the uneasiness of a Temptation, and being unwilling to bear the conflict with our corrupt inclinations? Suffering with patience, is the Duty we have undertaken; and we never yield to sin, but because we will not suffer the trouble of resisting it. So that we may generally set this down for the occasion of our offences; That we are unwilling to bear the uneasiness, and take the pains necessary for preserving our selves innocent. There's an uneasiness in denying the Eyes their satisfaction; there's a trouble in standing out against the inclination of the

the other Senses and the Appetite; 'tis difficult to be silent under the itch of speaking; 'tis hard to avoid the occasions of Vanity; there's great struggle necessary, not to be led along with the Mode; and even a violence requisit to break Company and not be seduced by it; to overcome an ill habit, cannot be done without many a battel; the ordinary Temptations of life cannot be master'd but by Constancy and Diligence; nor any Christian Duty, whether as to Prayer or Sacraments, be well perform'd, but by labourious endeavours and vigilancy: So that a Christian, who will not take pains, who will not suffer many an uneasiness with peace and patience, who will not, like a resolute Soldier, stand out against every Assault that is made against him, and fight at every turn, as often as he meets his Enemy, and thus persevere to the end, must necessarly be overcome by the Flesh or the World, and be made a prey to his Adversary. And to what can his ruin at last be charg'd, but his Cowardice, his Fear, his Sloth: as being either surpriz'd by his Enemy for want of Watching and being on Duty; or else tamely surrendering himself, because he will not suffer the inconvenience of a necessary opposition? Thus he makes up

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but very ill Accounts, whilst to spare himself the pains of resisting sin, he chuses to expose himself to the punishment of it; and to avoid a Temporal Trouble, embraces Eternal Torments.

Thus, O God, must we here lay before thee the root of all our evils, whilst undertaking to be thy Soldiers, we soon forget our obligation, aud chuse rather to yield, than to fight; we let every thing master us, and yet promise, nothing shall do it: Help us, O God, in this our weakness; and thou, O *Holy Ghost*, inspire this day our Hearts with new courage; give us strength to resist all evil, constancy to undergo all troubles, and let us never be over-rul'd by any other fear or shame: but that of offending thee. Pardon me all my past infidelity and treachery, and let me once more be listed to fight under thy Standard; stand by me in all dangers, go before me in all difficulties, and now give me Grace to persevere to the end.

Ember-

Ember Wedneſday in Whitſun-Week.

LESSON.

Acts C. 2. V. 14. ends V. 21.

I will pour forth my Spirit upon them 'Tis ſomething extraordinary, that in this great Solemnity of Joy and thankſgiving, the Church ſhould oblige all her Children to Humiliation and Penance: but the reaſon is, becauſe in this week, Biſhops give Holy Orders, Ordaining Prieſts and Deacons and other Miniſters of the Church; and being ſenſible how abſolutly neceſſary the *Holy Ghoſt* is for them, in the diſcharge of their Function; therefore ſhe ſummons all the Faithful to make their addreſſes to God, in their behalf, in Faſting and Prayer, that ſo this Spirit may be abundantly pour'd forth upon them, and they be thus made Worthy Miniſters of Gods Church. Now this Summons ought to be faithfully perform'd by all People, inaſmuch as this is a great concern of the whole Body, of which they

they are Members A good Pastor helps to build up and support Christs Church; but an ill one, as much as in him lies, overthrows and pulls it down; he neglects those, who are within the fold, and by his disorders, makes those, blaspheme who are without; he betrays the Cause he undertakes, and either starves or poysons those he is oblig'd to feed; hence such a Pastor is one of the severest Judgments God can send to a flock, and tho' he be a certain punishment of all sins; yet he may more justly fall to their share, who, on these days, when the Church obliges, never concern themselves, in imploring the assistance of Gods spirit, for such as are presented for this charge; but are seeking prophanely their own satisfaction, when they should be making their application to God in the Spirit of Humility, for this public good: are wholy unconcern'd, when the most important concern of the Church is in hand, such as requires the concurrence of all, as being for the good of all. Truly if they did but reflect, how much the Church suffers from the scandal of ill Pastors and from the neglect of slothful ones, it were to be hop'd, none of its Members would fail in uniting with her in their Addresses to God, for the preventing such mischiefs for the future:

and

and if they did but conſider, how much every particular Flock ſuffers that is under the conduct of an unqualified Paſtor, either from his unſeaſonable ſilence, or his indiſcreet advice, or his undue adminiſtration of the Sacraments, or his favouring, if not encouraging them in the diſorderly method of their lives, with other miſchievous effects, I think it might be a ſufficient encouragement to theſe days Devotion; that ſo, if the Church cannot be wholly freed from this Spiritual contagion, they at leaſt may be ſecur'd againſt it, and have no part in the evil.

How ought we all then pray this day, that none may be promoted to Holy Orders, but ſuch as are called by God, and prepar'd by his ſpecial Grace, to be fit Miniſters in his Church: that none may be preſented, who have their Eye upon Preferment, upon Worldly Intereſt, Titles, Reſpect, or the hopes of an eaſie Life, who thus make Heaven ſtoop to the Earth, and even, in ſome manner, proſtitute the Holy Ghoſt, to ſerve their baſe and worldly ends, and thus engage themſelves in a State of life, where the number and weight of their ſins daily encreaſe in proportion to the greatneſs of the Miniſtry, which they

they daily abuſe? Ought we not again extend our Prayers this day, that God, by his infinit Grace, would prevent thoſe many abuſes committed in the Church by thoſe, who have the priviledge of Preſenting to Benefices; who being entruſted, like common Fathers, faithfully to provide the Flock, according to the beſt of their care, with ſuch as, upon juſt enquiry, they judge beſt qualified for that great Charge, quite forget their Truſt, and inſtead of providing for the Flock, make it their whole concern to provide for themſelves, expoſing the Charge to Sale, and preſenting him, who will give moſt Money for it? And where Conſcience will not allow of this Traffick; yet is there not ſtill variety of abuſes; ſince the only motive of Preſenting one to fill a vacancy, being the Qualifications for the juſt performance of the Duty; the leaſt regard is generally had to this, and that which determines the choice, is the conſideration of ſome Convenience, Friendſhip, Family, or the Deſire of obliging ſome Perſon, whoſe favour may be ſerviceable? And thus while Church Benefices are beſtow'd on the conſideration of theſe Worldly Goods, it comes to be little leſs than

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a palliated Sale; whilſt the giving ſuch Employments, on the motive of Temporal things, tho' it has not the form, yet, in effect, it is nothing but ſelling them. And tho' ſometimes it may not be in the Patron's Power to preſent one, whom he judges truly proper for the Flock; yet is he not bound to come as near it as he can? What if he cannot do the beſt, will this juſtifie his Trading for what in it ſelf is Holy? Why ſhall he put it, for Intereſt ſake, into ſuch hands who deſign nothing but to make it Mercenary? And if thus purchas'd, by an ill Miniſter's neglect and bad example, Vice and Wickedneſs ſhould ſpread amongſt the Flock, Who ſhall anſwer for this corruption of the People? He that comes as near his Duty, as circumſtances will permit, can ſay, *Servavi animam meam*: but to venture the People being Heathens, becauſe he cannot make them the beſt Chriſtians, is what no one ought to do in his Family, and why then in his Pariſh? And to put a Wolf over the Flock, becauſe he cannot have the beſt Shepherd, is what none will do with his Sheep: and why then with his People? God is certainly diſhonour'd with Vice, and therefore it muſt be a Duty for every Chriſtian in their

their respective places to see Virtue as much encourag'd and promoted as they can. Let it then be the principal subject of our Prayers this day, to beseech Almighty God to deliver his Church from all abuses of this kind; that none may be presented to Holy Orders or Benefices, but those whose Virtue and Zeal shew they are chosen by him: thus let us pray in private, thus in in the Publick Liturgy, in our *Memento's*, &c. that so the remedy may be as extensive as the mischief.

Trinity Sunday.

First after Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 11. V. 32. to the end.

HOW *unsearchable are the ways of God!* Having now, in the Solemnity of *Whitsuntide*, compleated all the Festivals belonging to Man's Redemption, and the Establishment of the Church of Christ

Christ, we are this day call'd to Celebrate, with all possible reverence, the most adorable Mystery of the Blessed Trinity; to acknowledge, with gratitude, all that has been done in our behalf, to have been the Mercy and Work of the most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, blessed for ever more. And tho' in regard of all that has been wrought for our Redemption, as likewise of this days Mystery, we may justly cry out; O the depth of the Treasures of God's Wisdom and Knowledge: How incomprehensible are his Judgments; how unsearchable his ways! Yet thus confessing his infinit Greatness and our Nothing, may we still bless and adore, what we cannot search into or comprehend: For *Light* and *Darkness* too are equally to bless our Lord: and the Cherubins bowing down with their Faces veil'd with their Wings, shew us, what we are to do, whilst that infinit Majesty which removes God from our Knowledge, may help to draw us nearer to him by our more profound Humility and Adoration. Thus our God being Light inaccessible, and we nothing but Darkness, yet does not this our Darkness hinder us from approaching to him, as in *Praise*, *Adoration*, *Thanksgiving*, so like-

likewise in *Faith*. And I cannot but think, this Myſtery is deſignedly propos'd to us at this time, when having ſeen a Church eſtabliſh'd in the Apoſtles, by the viſible deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, Commiſſion'd to teach all Nations, and with an obligation on all Nations to believe her under pain of Damnation, we are by this firſt ſtep into Chriſtianity, in the belief of this Myſtery, taught to receive the other Doctrines ſhe delivers to us, notwithſtanding the darkneſs, that may be on our ſide, and that we cannot comprehend them. For as I believe in God, and adore him in all the hidden ways of his Providence, tho' to me they are all incomprehenſible; ſo I think my ſelf oblig'd to ſubmit, with as ready a Faith, to whatever Doctrines belong to him, however, thro' my weakneſs, they are to me unſearchable; and 'tis only by this way I can become a true member of the Faithful.

For Faith is a Virtue, which does not directly look into the *reaſonableneſs* of the *thing deliver'd*, by examining how ſuitable it is in it ſelf to *Human Reaſon*; but into the *Truth* and *Security* of the *Deliverer*; and being once evidently convinc'd of this, it readily receives it, with

with a greater confidence of its being *Truth*, from that *Light* accompanying it from the *Deliverer*, than if it had the *Light* of *Human Reason* to give some evidence of the *Thing*, as consider'd in *it self*. Hence the *True Christian*, in his *Faith* of things *Divine*, ever follows the steps of *Abraham*, who was the Father of the Faithful, who, as St. *Paul* says, *Rom.* 4. 18 *Contra spem in spem credidit: Against hope, believ'd in hope*: that is, as there expounded, *was not weak in Faith, upon the consideration of his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's Womb*: notwithstanding all this darkness of the thing promis'd in it self; *He stagger'd not at the promise of God, thro' unbelief; but was strong in Faith giving glory to God; being fully perswaded, that what he had promis'd, he was able to perform*. Thus the true Christian proceeds, as to every thing belonging to Faith: he only enquires into this *one point*, that is, *Whether the Authority that delivers it, be Divine, and carries the Security of God along with it*; and being evidently convinc'd of this, he assents to the points deliver'd, as to most certain and infallible Truths, tho' private Reason at the same time affords no light

to recommend them, as consider'd in themselves. By this method, his Faith is ever ready and lively in regard of points, that are most difficult, 'tis peaceable and steady in the midst of seeming Contradictions, 'tis obedient, even as to be ready to Sacrifice all, 'tis persevering in the greatest Trials, 'tis constant and faithful in the midst of a general Infidelity: Such was the fulness of *Abraham*'s Faith, and such the Christian's Faith ought to be, since being built on no other foundation than the Truth of God himself, 'tis much superior to all human Fears, Phancies or Reasoning, and therefore admitting no just doubts, can no ways stagger, thro' unbelief.

This is the method and ground of his Faith; and thus, as he receives a Truth deliver'd by Human Authority with a Human Faith; so whatever is deliver'd by a *Divine Authority*, he receives with a *Faith Divine*. And where this Authority is not evident, his Assent to whatever it delivers, is accompanied with *Doubts* and *Fears*, and consequently is not true Faith, much less Divine. In this manner he believes in general whatever is taught in the Holy Scriptures, with a Divine Faith, because he has an evidence of their having been writ by the

Spirit

Spirit of God: but when he comes to the particular points there contain'd; then his Faith is ever proportion'd to that Authority, which expounds them to him: So that when he expounds them by his own *Private Judgment*, and seems inclin'd to adhear to such an interpretation, as to the real truth of God's Word; Upon reflection, considering, he has no other Authority for this Interpretation, but only the agreeableness it has to his own Judgment, he cannot therefore embrace it with a Divine Faith; because tho' the Scripture it self be recommended by Divine Authority; yet this Interpretation stands only on the Authority of his *own Judgment*, which is only Human, and consequently, if no greater assent be given to it, than is justly its due, it must necessarily be accompanied with doubts and fears, and is subject to alteration, upon any other Sense of the same place of Scripture, at any other time, that may appear more reasonable to him; which *uncertainty* is inconsistent with True and *Divine Faith*: and if he takes a step farther, and having consulted some Learned and Pious Divine, assents to it in the Sense, as thus deliver'd by him: and afterwards considering, there's no other Authority

for this, than the Sincerity and Learning of this Interpreter, he finds this comes very much ſhort of Divine Faith, and muſt unavoidably be follow'd with doubts, upon the hearing any other of equal Learning and Piety, giving a contrary Senſe of Holy Writ. And thus, wherever he turns, he is ſtill at a loſs, till he finds an Interpreter authoriſd by God himſelf, whom he has ſolemnly promiſ'd to guide and aſſiſt by his Holy Spirit, for the teaching the Truth: And having happily met with this, he Hears and Believes with a Divine Faith; becauſe, as the Scripture it ſelf, ſo its Interpretation too is here deliver'd with the Authority of God, and therefore is not a Human, but Divine Truth, wholy free from doubts & fears, and not queſtionable upon any difficulties mov'd by any Human Learning whatever: and becauſe, upon a diligent enquiry, he can find no ſuch Authority thus Commiſſion'd by Chriſt and ſecur'd by his Spirit, for teaching the Truth of the Scriptures, excepting only the *Catholic Church*; therefore in her only can he reſt; and while ſhe Teaches, he Hears and Believes, depending for the Truth of every point, on the *Solemn Promiſe of Chriſt, and the aſſiſtance of his Spirit*;

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for tho' Heaven and Earth pass away, yet his Word will never pass away. Whatever difficulty therefore may appear in the Doctrines deliver'd, this is no weakning to his Faith, as long as in the *Deliverer* there is manifest a Divine Authority.

Corpus-Christi-day.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 11. V. 23. ends V. 29.

Take and eat, this is my Body. The day of the Institution of this Divine Banquet, having been in great part taken up with Devotions then justly due to the Sacred Passion of our Lord: therefore is this day set a part, with an Octave, wherein the Faithful may wholy apply themselves, to consider all the wonders of this great Mystery, and adore the Goodness of their Redeemer, in preparing them this Table of Mercy. For 'tis truly a Table of Mercy, whence our

our Lord not only feeds our Souls, with his Body and Blood, thus to nouriſh and ſtrengthen us in a Spiritual life; but likewiſe feeds our Minds, our Thoughts and Hearts, with all thoſe Sacred Inſtructions, neceſſary to overcome the World, and conduct us to a Seat of Glory. 1. In leaving us, this great Myſtery, under the Veils of Bread and Wine, ſo that in appearance, it ſeems but mean and inconſiderable; he exerciſes the Faith of the humble Chriſtians, and confounds the Pride of the great ones: teaching us, that true Chriſtian Virtue deſires not any pomp or ſhew, in drawing the Eyes of the World, by Diſcourſe or Reputation; but rather to lie hid; becauſe, tho' to appear ſo far, as may be neceſſary to inſtruct others, be Charity; yet to appear, with the hopes of being admir'd, is Vanity and Self-love. And if this be to be avoided at all times, certainly it muſt be moſt deteſtable in the Church; firſt in thoſe, that Preach Chriſt and his Goſpel, in thoſe that Officiate at the Altar, in thoſe that pretend to a Religious life, in all thoſe, that approach to the Communion, or aſſiſt at the Sacrifice of the *Maſs*. For whilſt Men undertake to propagate the Goſpel of Chriſt and

ſerve

ſerve at his Altar, ought it not to be done with the Spirit of Chriſt? Whilſt they come to *receive* him, or *offer* him to the Eternal Father; can this be done with any Spiritual advantage to them, who in their very manner of doing it, make war againſt him, and ſet up for Vanity, which is the thing he deſires to baniſh from all Chriſtian Duties? Therefore, as for thoſe Paſtors, who, in any of their Functions, ſeek themſelves; and for thoſe of the Faithful, who come to their publick Duties in ſuch a light, vain, and Worldly manner, as to draw Eyes and admiration upon themſelves, 'tis plain they walk not in the ſteps of their Maſter, who in the Church hiding his Divinity, cannot be pleas'd with thoſe, who there expoſe their Vanities: and they muſt not wonder at the little improvement they find from their beſt Devotions, who in the place Conſecrated to God's Honour, come to ſeek their own; and where Idolatry is moſt abominable, ſo far promote it, as they deſire to be admir'd, ſince ſo far they withdraw the Hearts of the Faithful from God on themſelves.

2. Chriſt being in the *Euchariſt*, as it were in a State of death, where his Body and Blood are Conſecrated and

Offer'd

Offer'd, as Myſtically ſeparated from each other; hence not only thoſe that Offer, but likewiſe all that receive this Holy Food, are oblig'd, as St. *Paul* directs, to ſhew forth the death of our Lord; taking it in remembrance of his death, and there learning to die with him; ſo as to be ever ready to ſurrender their lives to him, whenever he ſhall pleaſe to demand them. And not only ſo; but as he liv'd and dy'd a Sacrifice for us; ſo we both living and dying, may endeavour to offer a continual Sacrifice to him: Sacrifice our Bodies by daily Penance and Mortification, and the practice of Self-denial, in as many particulars, as may ſerve to bring us to an entire ſubjection to his bleſſed Will: Sacrifice our Souls by Adoration, Thankſgiving, Love and Prayer; Sacrifice our Time, by employing it, not in ſeeking our ſelves, but in the conſtant diſcharge of our Duties, and as may be for his Honour; Sacrifice our Worldly Goods, not by abuſing them in the ſupport of our Curioſity, Vanity, our Liberties and Vice, but like faithful Stewards, ſo expending what he has entruſted in our Hands, as we may be able to ſet all to his account. This is a Leſſon he Preaches to us, as often

often as we appear in presence of this holy Mystery; ever requiring us to render Sacrifice for Sacrifice: and if to this we could bring our lives, no question but our deaths would be so too.

3. Christ in the *Eucharist* being the Victim offer'd for the destruction of sin, teaches us daily, in the remembrance of his Sufferings, how faithfully we ought to join with him, in our most laborious endeavours for the same end. Hence all those true Penitents, and other well-meaning Souls, who heartily make War against sin, and sincerely desire to correct in themselves, whatever they perceive there displeasing to God, may with great confidence, not only appear before him, in offering him to his Eternal Father, but likewise often approach to him in the Holy Communion; because they are engag'd in the same Cause with him, for the overthrow of sin, and therefore may hope for plentiful supplies of his Grace, for the carrying on a vigorous War and being Conquerors in the end. But for those that live in sin, and take no care to deliver themselves from that slavery, methinks the very appearing before this Holy Victim, should be great confusion to them for their wickedness, and a daily

daily reproach of their insincerity and counterfeit Devotion, as often as they pretend to adore and pay homage to him. For while they maintain the cause of sin within their own Souls, with what Face can they behold him, who died for the destruction of sin? And what abominable dissimulation must it be, when they bow down to adore him? 'Tis all the Traitor's kiss; for having Treason in their Hearts, they must be wicked Children, disloyal Servants, and false Adorers, who bow down before God, but serve the Devil. Is this to be Christians? Is this complying with the Precept of the Church, or Sanctifying the day? Much less criminal is their Idolatry, who knowing not God, blindly worship *Dagon* and *Baal*, than the detestable Religion of these, who thus confessing God, to his Face set the Devil before him: Scourges and Whips are too little to drive these out of the Temple, which they so often prophane: and however they are spar'd here, yet certainly a more rigorous Judgment waits for them, than for the worst of Heathens.

And yet, O God, how infinit are the abuses of Christians in [illegible] kind; who having a knowledge of all thy Mercies, still

ſtill live obſtinate in ſin! They appear often in thy preſence, adore before thee, and yet neither love nor ſerve thee. How many of theſe are daily in thy Temples, and even approach to thy Altar, where none can come thus polluted to partake of that Holy Food, but with Damnation to themſelves? Look, O Jeſu, on thy People, which thou haſt purchas'd with thy Blood, touch their Hearts with thy Grace, that they may be ſenſible of their obſtinacy and blindneſs; that they may hear and follow, what thou here teacheſt in this Sacred Myſtery. Be thou the Food of our Souls, the Principle of a new life: come this day and dwell within us, and ſo eſtabliſh us in our Duty, by the cure of all our weakneſſes, that we may ever abide in thee.

Sunday

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, *or second after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

1 *John* C. 3. V. 13. ends V. 18.

HE *that has the Substance of this world, and seeing his Brother in necessity, shuts his Heart against him; How does the love of God abide in him?* Christians often talk of the love of God, but here is the trial of it: and tho' it be not so demonstrative on the one part, as to conclude, that whoever relieves his Brother in necessity, has certainly the love of God in him; because it may be excluded, by living in the breach of other Duties; yet on the other part, the Apostle declares it as evident, That whoever refuses to give this relief, being able to do it, has not the love of God abiding in him. This is a perplexing consequence, enough to raise scruples in the Hearts of many; and tho' I am so sensible of the great mischiefs of

of a disturb'd and uneasie Conscience, as to prevent it all I can: yet knowing too, that a false peace of Mind is attended with Eternal Evils, therefore to more scruples here, I think as great a Duty, as in other cases it is to lay them. And tho' I cannot so far satisfie any, as positively to determin, how much in particular, and how often every one is to afford relief to their Neighbour, because this admitting of a great latitude, cannot be reduced to a point; and because of the many cheats of those, who pretend to necessity, and feel it not: yet there are some general Principles of Christianity, which give light in this matter, and may help to discover very considerable omissions in this obligation of Charity, and direct to a more exact complying with it.

For our Rule being to *Love our Neighbour as our selves*, and to assist him in his necessities out of what we can spare, and is truly superfluous to us, we see here an obligation of Charity, upon the evidence of others wants, and knowledge of our selves having something to spare; for this then in Charity and Justice is their right; because what is superfluous to us, is necessary for the Poor. But what is superfluous? Is that to be reckon'd

reckon'd so, which is necessary for Eating, Clothing, Family, Servants, for the Education or Provision of Children, for Divertisements? Truly, what is *necessary* for these ends cannot be judged *superfluous*; but how much is there superfluous of that, which, in these particulars, is often reputed necessary? If no more were expended on the Table and Clothing, than Nature requires for Decency and Support (allowing likewise for the difference of Conditions) there could be no reason of complaint: but if we once summ up, what is here laid out to provoke and *indulge a vicious Appetite, for Pomp, Magnificence, Ostentation and Excess*, we shall soon find, there's much greater Provision made for *these corrupt ends*, than for *Necessity* or *Convenience*; and that in many Families there's more thus singly laid out in the year, than might very well serve for the subsistance of a multitude of Poor. Now all this must be reckon'd as so much *Waste* and *Superfluous*; and this being the right of the Poor, it has been nothing less than mispending their Stock. Then if we look on father, and see how much in the year is spent, by calling over the Books of Taverns, Play-Houses, Musick-Houses, and places of other

other Entertainments, will not these immense summs be an evidence against thousands, to prove how much they had, that was superfluous: for however Diversion sometimes and the obliging a Friend, may be a plea for this kind of Expence; yet how very little is it, that can be placed to this account, in comparison of what is there left, meerly for Idleness or ill custom, to satisfie a vain Curiosity, or gratifie very unjust Desires? So much then as has been thus idly or viciously spent, in justice ought to have been apply'd to the relief of the Poor; the manner of expending it, shews it was superfluous, and this proves whose Right it was: and will be an evidence against those, of their being void of Charity, who have thus misemploy'd, what was entrusted in their Hands for the help of others.

For since the obligation of Charity is to love our Neighbour as our selves; how short do these come of this Duty, who prefer their own Vanties, their Diversions and Vice, before his Necessities? If they want Bread and Cloths, and I, being plentifully supply'd in these, want to satisfie my Curiosity, my unnecessary or disordered Desires: which of these wants ought to be first

reliev'd?

reliev'd? Truly they that ever find Money to anſwer their own Inclinations; but have it not to help their Neighbour in his neceſſities, have a large ſtock of vicious Self-love; but for Charity, it ſeems as far from them, as they are from loving their Neighbour as themſelves.

What then, are not Men Maſters of their own Purſes and Eſtates; and may not they lay out their Money in any lawful way, as they ſhall think fitting? The general practice, I fear, anſwers favourably to this queſtion; but according to the Principles of Chriſtianity, I think, whatever Title and Right a Man has to an Eſtate, he never becomes Maſter of what is ſuperfluous in it: for this God ſeems to have reſerv'd to himſelf, and by an Eternal Ordinance, has ſettled it as the Right of the Poor. So that tho' in providing for Family and Children, they uſe no more, than what's their own; yet when they come to ſatisfie all thoſe imaginary neceſſities, which are the ſuggeſtions of Vanity, Curioſity or the love of Pleaſure, this is generally ſpending what is not their own; for as to this part, which can be thus eaſily ſpar'd, they are in a more particular manner Stewards, and an account

account of it will be demanded of them: and what a dismal one will it be, when it shall appear, that Folly, Liberty, Luxury and Excess have devour'd those vast summs, which ought to have been apply'd to the relief of the Poor.

Wherein then is the advantage of the Rich above the Poor? In having in their Hands, wherewith to supply all their own real wants, and likewise the opportunity of distributing the like help to those in distress; so by their Riches to provide for this life and the next. But to think they have the priviledge of laying out their Money, not only as Necessity, Decency and Reason shall require; but of throwing it away with both Hands, to gratifie every idle, vain, pleasing or extravagant Inclination of their corrupt Nature, this I think is a very great mistake, and I believe, one of the reasons, that renders Salvation so difficult to the Rich Man; because by this method he is not only guilty of a great injustice, by defrauding the Poor; but, as stoln Goods seldom thrive, he mispends what he takes from them, in such ways, as are most prejudicial to his Eternal Good; in maintaining Idleness, strengthening his corrupt Passions, supporting Self-

love,

love, expoſing himſelf to dangers, encreaſing difficulties, nouriſhing vice, and engaging daily more and more in all the Snares of the Devil, the Fleſh and the World: and thus living on in the abuſe of thoſe Bleſſings, which were given him as a means of Salvation, and turning them to his own ruin, what wonder is it, that 'tis as hard for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, as for a Camel to paſs thro' the eye of a Needle? A hard ſaying: but, O God, how many viſible demonſtrations have we to believe it true, whilſt even amongſt Chriſtians, and thoſe, who, otherwiſe ſeem to be Men of Principles, we ſee ſo general a blindneſs in this point, that amongſt ſo many Rich, there appear ſo very few, but what go on without ſcruple in this broad way of Injuſtice and Uncharitableneſs, and not thinking of the true Chriſtian uſe of what God has given them! Thus corrupt is the World, and tis only thou, O God of Heaven, canſt remedy this evil. Give then a ſenſe of true Charity to all thoſe, whom thou haſt favour'd with Earthly Bleſſings: Turn their Hearts from all their evil ways; and ſo open their Eyes, that they may no more abuſe to their own Damnation

nation, what thou hast given them for their everlasting good Grant us all a true Knowledge of our Duty in this point, soften our Hearts towards our Neighbour, and in our relief of his Distresses may we have ever reason to hope, that thy Love abides in us.

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet* C. 5. V. 6. ends V. 11.

BE sober and watch: for your Enemy the Devil, goes about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. To secure us against all the designs of a malicious and diligent Enemy, the Apostle advises us to be *Sober*, that is, to observe such a moderation and temper in all our Desires, Passions, Affections, Thoughts, and whetever concerns we have, and be so watchful herein, as to give no opportunity to our Enemy of making a prey of us, who is ever waiting to improve every little disorder, for

the drawing us wholy into his Snares. For the good of our Souls has a great reſemblance with the health of our Bodies; as theſe, tho' compos'd of very contrary Elements, are yet ſound enough, as long as the different qualities are in a good proportion of temper, but are preſently in diſorder and haſtening to death, as ſoon as any one of them, whether Heat, or Moiſture or Cold becomes Immoderate, and corrupts the reſt: juſt ſo it is in our Spiritual health: we have variety of contrary Paſſions within us, which can do us no prejudice as long as we keep them compos'd and moderate; but if once any one of them gains upon the reſt and grows to an exceſs, the temper of the Soul is preſently diſorder'd, 'tis ſick, and Death cannot be far of. The ground of this lies very open, becauſe the action of our Heart and Soul, in this mortal State, is ſo very limited and confin'd, that if any one Paſſion or Deſire becomes violent, it carries the Soul, as it were with a Torrent, along with it and is a perpetual diſtraction and hindrance to it in regard of all Duties. So that whereas the Heart ought ever to be free in the Service of God, and thro' that love it bears him, be watchful and attentive in the

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discharge of every Christian obligation; by this excess in any one point, it becomes streightn'd, and is in danger of being withdrawn from the Duty it ows its Lord

To prevent then every Passion, Affection or Desire of the Soul from growing Immoderate or to an Excess, is the *Sobriety* St. *Peter* exacts from every Christian, not only in regard of objects, that are evidently sinful; for all that is otherwise sufficiently forbid, as wholy alienating the Heart from God, and being the condition of those unhappy ones, whom the Devil waits not now to devour, but being his, are already devour'd by him: but chiefly in relation to all that, which being indifferent in it self, becomes dangerous only by Excess: 'tis here the Christian is advis'd to be *Sober and Watchful*; and the Caution is so comprehensive, that I know not any one concern belonging to this life, which directly falls not under it. The Apostle in this place mentions but one, which is in regard of the misfortunes of this World, and the care every one is obliged to have, in providing for the necessary assistance of themselves and those belonging to them: and here, tho' the obligation be so very great, that the

neglect of it makes the Christian worse than the Heathen; yet while he is thus strictly bound to be *Careful*, he is still as strictly forbid the permitting this Care to grow to the excess of being *Solicitous*: So that however he may be reduc'd to those frightful circumstances of seeing nothing but misery and distress before him, yet is he not allow'd by the Apostle, to let his Heart be seis'd with anxiety or the terrors of a dejected Spirit; but advis'd to humble himself under the powerful Hand of God, casting all his solicitude on him, being Sober and Watchful, that he be not made a prey to his Enemy: Now if the excess of Care in a matter of so great and sensible a concern as this, lays the Soul open, so as to render its condition hazardous; what affection is there, tho' in it self commendable or innocent, which, in its *Excess*, ought not to be the subject of the Christian's Care? Parents and Children, Husband, Wife and Friends have a Duty of love towards each other; and yet if this, on any side, becomes Immoderate, they need not doubt, but in this they give the Devil some hopes and encouragement to keep an Eye upon them. He knows what a perpetual distraction this gives to a Soul, by its frights

frights and cares; how great solicitude it raises, how many Duties it disturbs, what vain expences it occasions; that it will certainly indispose them on their Death-beds, if not make them unfit to die: and that if on some lucky hit, their Duty to God happens not to be consistent with what is desir'd or expected from them, they'll chuse rather to forfeit that, than be uneasie or unkind to those they love: hence the Devil is ever hovering about them, watching to promote every occasion of evil; and if they keep not as strict a watch on themselves in checking whatever is immoderate in their affections, they'll certainly be in danger of answering all his expectations.

The like hazard is in regard of Company, Diversion, Cloths, Preferment, Eating, Drinking, Gaming, nay even of Business and Employments too, and whatever concern there is in getting or keeping of Money: for tho' all these be very lawful in their kind and just degree; yet whenever they gain so far upon a Soul, as to become its great Concern, and to command it, instead of being commanded by it; such a Soul is evidently in danger from this Excess, however harmless the thing may be in it

ſelf. For the Heart of Man cannot bear any extraordinary application to one thing, but it certainly indiſpoſes it for other Duties, and this one thing becomes a diſtraction to every thing elſe: So that whereas his Temporal and Eternal good depends on the obſervance of that Golden Rule, *Age quod agis*; of being attentive to every Duty as he performs it, and carefully doing what he does: this ſets his Heart upon the wander, and is the occaſion of doing nothing well: and then it ſeldom ſtops here; for, tho' for ſome time, it only gives diſturbance; yet at length it leads ſenſibly into greater inconveniencies, makes way for ſin, and puts by many Duties; ſo that of an imperfect Chriſtian, he too often ends in being no Chriſtian at all: for the immoderate love of ſomething Worldly, generally excluding the love of God, what does he become at length, but a Body without Life, that is a meer Carcaſs? And as he thus lives, ſo ſickneſs finds him; and ſo, 'tis to be fear'd, Death carries him away; preſenting a Soul before God, full of nothing but the World; there was his Treaſure, and there it is ſtill; God is no more to him, than he was before; and his delight being not

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in him, what can he be but miserable? And why all this, but because he was not Sober and Watchful?

Hence I cannot but think it a matter, not only of Discretion, but Duty, for every Christian, in their respective degrees, to be very careful in avoiding all that, which is apt too much to possess the Heart, and take it off the obligation of their State. Being fond of Alehouses and Taverns, of Drink and Company, have drawn many of the lower and middle rank from their business to ruin: Gaming, Sports and Entertainments, in their excess, have been the overthrow of very good Families: the love of Musick, of Money, of Reputation, of News, of Diversion, of Idleness and Company, have spoil'd many a Church-man: *Hic ceciderunt fortes Israel.* Here great numbers have irrecoverably fain; their not keeping a strict Hand on themselves, in moderating their Inclinations, have taken off their Hearts from their business, have encreas'd their Passions, have first made them idle, and by degrees brought them to worse than nothing. Ought not then every Christian, as soon as he perceives himself with a fond satisfaction, inclining to any of these ways, which by advancing

vancing in them have ruin'd so many, be presently jealous of himself, suspect all the reasons of Treachery, which push him forward; Give ear to the Apostle in being Sober and Watchful, and put a stop to that in the beginning, which otherwise, with a little encouragement, will prove too strong for him, and not let him see his misery, till he is in it, and then past remedy?

O God, when I consider the infinit misforunes, that have their beginning from no other root than this; what wast of Estates, ruin of Families, loss of Souls, Scandal of Religion, and what intolerable abuses have by this way crept into the Sanctuary, I cannot but lament our Common misery, and implore the powerful help of thy Grace to prevent it for the future. Help us then, O God, in this our weakness, and by thy light from above, make us sensible of the dangers that are before us; and that presuming on our own strength, is no security against them: Grant, we may be Sober and Watchful, Moderate and Temperate in all things, that we may avoid his Snares, who is watching to devour us, and never venter rashly in those ways, where so many have perish'd.

IV.

IV. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 8. V. 18. ends V. 23.

THE Creature is ſubject to Vanity againſt its will. To a Soul that loves God, this life is a Baniſhment and Slavery, wherein, tho' it reſolutly makes oppoſition againſt all that is ſin; yet it ſuffers ſo much from its own natural corruption, from the continual ſolicitations of Pride, Paſſion and Concupiſcence, and this even againſt its will, that it renders this life very uneaſie; and it cannot but grieve, to meet with ſo many contradictions and hinderances in that way, whereby it aſpires to God. Hence it is, that a Soul poſſeſs'd with this Charity or Love of God, waits with an earneſt expectation, to be deliver'd from the bondage of corruption, into the Glorious Liberty of the Children of God; it groans within it ſelf, and, as it were in a painful labour, ſighs in expectation of the effect of its adop-

adoption, that is, of being deliver'd from its Body and this World, the root of all the evil it ſuffers: Hence that hour, when its Deliverer ſhall come, tho' otherwiſe attended with circumſtances of terror, is very deſirable, thro' that Hope it repoſes in his infinit Mercy and Goodneſs, who is his Redeemer, who having already paid the ranſom, for its being freed from the power of ſin, has promis'd (and he is faithful to his promiſe) not to let thoſe periſh, who are not in love with their Slavery.

This is the Character of the Choſen of God, thus fearful of the dangers, and tired with the Aſſaults and Uſurpation of ſin, to deſire that moment, which ſhall deſtroy its Tyranny, and be a new Birth, in bringing them forth to a new and better life. But this State being imperfect, this Deſire is ſo too, being as yet the firſt Fruits of the Spirit, and only the beginning of that perfect effuſion, which ſhall be conſummated in the other life. If I deſire therefore to be deliver'd from this body of ſin, and enter into the Liberty of the Children of God, I know this Deſire is mix'd, thro' my great weakneſs, and I have but too much reaſon to ſigh, that being

being clog'd with this weight of corruption, I sigh no more for that Glorious Liberty. O God, do thou manifest thy self daily more and more to me, that being still more sensible of the evils of this Banishment, my Desires of being deliver'd may daily encrease, that I may sigh and groan with the sighs of this Apostle, till the hour of being dissolv'd shall open me a way into thy Presence, where my joys shall be unmix'd in the Possession of Thee, the only perfect and everlasting Good. O perfect Redemption! O full and entire Adoption! O consummate effusion of the Holy Spirit! When wilt thou be accomplish'd in me?

These Desires are the happy breathings of those Souls, who are effectually mov'd by the Divine Spirit, who giving them a true knowledge of all the dangers and evils of sin, to which they are here expos'd, makes them earnestly long for their Port of Security and Rest. How unhappy then is the condition of all those, who being in love with their Captivity, study daily to render it more aimable, and not resenting the Vanity and Evils, to which they are subject, by their Folly and Sensuality are ever encreasing and multiplying

tiplying the dangers of their Pilgrimage; and hence have nothing more terrible to them, than the thought of that hour, when they shall, I do not say, be deliver'd from their trouble, but violently torn from what they most love! This, I fear, is the too general misfortune of Christians, who not considering, that not only their own Hearts are subject to corruption, but that all Creatures, in their kind, are subject to vanity, not willing, in becoming the Instruments of sin, take no care to retrench the use of them, as much as may be, by keeping within the bounds of Necessity and Decency; but to satisfie their Curiosity, their Vanity, and other ways to please their sensual part, expose themselves a thousand ways to be poyson'd by them; seek Temptations, which in their Prayers they seemingly desire to avoid, and thus daily encrease the difficulties of Salvation, in removing themselves at a greater distance from God: for certainly the World and all Creatures being subject to such variety of Corruption, the engagement and love of these can never be improv'd, but by diminishing the love of God: for if the Holy *a Kempis*, experienc'd, that he scarce went abroad, but he re-

turn'd

turn'd home worse: it cannot be expected, but as far as others expose themselves more than he did, they must still find more pernicious effects of their rashness. For tho' we may have grounds to hope, that Almighty God will prevent these ill consequences in those, who make no farther use of Creatures, than Necessity or their Duty requires, especially upon their constant and humble recommendation of themselves to his Protection: yet who has assur'd us, he will do the same, when without necessity or other reason, besides gratifying the importunity of our own Appetites, we indiscreetly, but voluntarily, put our selves in hazard? And therefore, tho' the life of the antient Hermits, who hiding themselves in Deserts, cut off at once all the dangers of Creatures and the World, as much as was possible, was a particular Call; yet I cannot but think it a general Call to all Christians, to be Hermits or Recluses, as far as the circumstances of their State will bear: for since the World is wicked, its Conversation generally corrupt, its Divertisements very vain and dangerous, and every one is bound to avoid whatever is likely to hazard their Eternal Lot; therefore ought every one, as

far

far as is consistent with their State, retrench as many particulars, as they find to be any considerable encrease of their danger: for since Father and Mother and Land are to be forsaken, when they become a hindrance to our everlasting good; what can there be, after this, that is not to be abandon'd on the same account? This is a renouncing the World, and a Self-denial, which makes up, not only the Hermit, but the Christian; and he that thinks to be one without it, may be one at large, but, I think, not a Gospel one; and how unsafe as to Eternity, I leave him to consider.

The consideration of these dangers from the unnecessary use of Creatures, without any other reason, moves many Christians to avoid Plays, Balls and publick Shews, as also those repeated Gazings in the Park and Streets, as knowing the Devil to take the advantage of these vain Curiosities, for the conveying his poyson into Souls, and that these being thus the Instruments of his Malice, ought ever to be suspected by them. 'Tis the same as to reading Romances and other Books of Entertainment or Error, as likewise in the greatest part of Conversation and Discourse:

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for all these being generally the mutual Communication of Infirmities, of Pride and all manner of Passions, and helping either to soften the Heart, or amuse the Spirit, and most certainly to distract the Thoughts in all manner of Christian Duties; therefore those that regard their Salvation in earnest, are very careful in avoiding, or at least in the choice of them; the sense of that vanity and those dangers, to which they are subject against their wills, ever making them very cautious not to encrease them by choice. Thus the Principles of Christianity lead even those that live in the World, to some degrees of the Recluse; and for this end, is Retirement and Solitariness recommended by the Holy *Kempis*, and S. *Francis Sales*, not so as to decline all Company or Recreation, but to admit of them, without being in love with them; to admit them as far as Civility, Business and a moderate Diversion shall require, as far as they may be a help, and not the hazard or ruin of our Souls. But thou must be our Director, O God, in this point, to carry us on betwixt all extremes, so as not to be morose and scrupulous on the one side, nor yet indiscreet or rash on the other. Thou hast made every

Creature

Creature for our use and assistance in this life; but while we seek help in thy Blessings, the Devil maliciously endeavours to turn all into Curses: spurring us ever forward to the abuse of thy Gifts; so that we are often poyson'd by those very things, which thou hast ordain'd for our Preservatives and Life. Thus, against their will, the Creatures are our misfortune; and 'tis only thy Heavenly Wisdom can secure us: protect us then, O God, against all the unavoidable difficulties we are to meet with, and may we never more be so blind to our own Eternal Interest, as by our follies to encrease the dangers of our Salvation.

V. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet.* C 3. V. 8. ends V. 15.

Sanctifie Chriſt our Lord in your hearts. The Duty of every Chriſtian is to work ſuch a change in the inward Man, that whereas they bring with them into the World nothing but corruption, inclinations to Folly and Vanity, Obſtinacy and Self-Love, and a ſort of averſion to good; they may, by laborious endeavours and the help of Grace, ſo overcome themſelves, as to have a true value for no other Goods, but thoſe of the Goſpel, deſire no other ſatisfaction more than that of a good Conſcience, and aim at the practice of nothing more earneſtly, than that life, which Chriſt recommended and practiced, and that is, to have their Deſires, Affections and Will wholy regulated by him; and this is truly to put on Chriſt, and as the Apoſtle here commands, to Sanctifie him in their Hearts. For as

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a corrupt Heart, in practice, esteems nothing but what is like it self, corrupt; finds no relish in any thing, but what is Sensual and Worldly; and therefore may be truly said, to be unhappily Consecrated to the World; this being what above all, it seeks rest in, admires and adores, and thus becomes Idolatrous: So a Christian Heart, however naturally perverse, yet what it above all esteems, seeks and labours for, is the Law, life, and love of Christ: this is the Treasure it desires to purchase, this is its only valuable good, this is the end of its Religion, and it knows no other Sanctification but in this. To such a Soul Christ is the only solid Truth. Christ is the only substantial Life, Christ is the only safe and unerring way: as far as it departs from him, so much it forsakes of Truth, it loses of life and goes out of its way; and therefore to prevent all such miscarriages, it still endeavours to keep an Eye upon him; by this Rule endeavours to walk, and on this lays the ground of its future happiness.

But now as to the particulars, in which it desires to follow this Divine Original, the principal ones are, in this days Lesson, set down by St. *Peter*, 1. In keeping

keeping a perfect Peace and Union with all Neighbours, Friends and Enemies. 2. In having compaſſion on the neceſſities of others. 3. In maintaining a Brotherly love. 4. In being merciful, by not exaggerating, but excuſing others faults. 5. In Modeſty. 6. In Humility. 7. In not rendering evil for evil; but Bleſſing for Curſing. 8. In avoiding all Evilſpeaking, Detraction, Lying and Deceit. 9. In declining ſin and doing good. 10. In eſteeming it a Bleſſing to ſuffer for Juſtice. 11. In not fearing the evils of this World. In theſe particulars the true Chriſtian thinks himſelf oblig'd to come as near his Divine Maſter, as poſſibly he can, as knowing this to be the only way of ſerving God in Spirit and Truth; and that whatever Character a Man may have in the World, however he may have gain'd the opinion of Holineſs, yet that before God he cannot be truly holy, if in any one of theſe points he voluntarily, negligently or affectedly leaves the Goſpel and departs from his Maſter: for that in this he does not follow, but indeed forſakes God.

And becauſe all theſe accompliſhments, as likewiſe the whole Syſtem of the Goſpel, may be reduc'd to this

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one point of an *Humble Charity*, therefore the good Chriſtian ſeriouſly applies himſelf to the conſideration of this, as it was practis'd by Chriſt our Lord, and having fram'd, not an imperfect, but a true Idea of it, he by this endeavours to direct his Life, his Thoughts, his Words, his Actions; and thus only hopes truly to Sanctifie him in his Heart. And tho' he finds the method of the World, with the violence of a torrent, carrying him quite another way, yet knowing the World to be contrary to Chriſt, he values not its Authority, regards not its Precedents, however confirm'd by Number, Power and Cuſtom; but taking Chriſt to be his Guide, he generally concludes himſelf ſo much nearer him, the farther he departs from what the World commends.

Hence for the regulating himſelf, he firſt conſiders Chriſt, as to his Words and the common ſubject of his Diſcourſe: and here he finds, his whole deſign was for the benefit of others, to inform them, in what conſiſted their only Happineſs and moſt ſubſtantial Good; it was to expoſe the vanity of Worldly Goods, of Ambition, of Pride, of Hypocriſy, and the love of Pleaſure; it was to eſtabliſh the Worſhip, the Love and

and Fear of God, Humility, Patience, Self-denial and Disengagement from the World. There was nothing ever heard in his Discourse, of Curiosity, or that could draw the Hearts of his Hearers to things of this World. He knew all things past, present and to come, comprehended all the Secrets of Nature, of Sciences and of Hearts, and yet was never heard to mention any thing of this kind; he never instructed his Apostles in any Human Science, nor explicated to them any difficulties of Scripture relating to Earthly things, such as are the subject of the Curious. His Spirit seem'd wholy taken up with God, with the Salvation of Men, and things of Eternity. So that being in this World, his business was altogether of the other.

2. As to his Actions; tho' he wrought many Miracles, necessary for the proof of his being the *Messias*, and for fulfilling the Prophesies; yet all was done in such a manner, as was free from ostentation; nothing resembling the Grandeur or Pomp of the World; avoiding Courts, seeking the Poor and Distressed, and generally Preaching to them. His life was a life of fatigue and labour, always employ'd in his Function.

Function. His only aim in all he did was to perform the Will of God: For this he came into the World; this he ſays, was his food and nouriſhment, *Cibus meus.* This he did always: *Quæ placita ſunt ei, facio ſemper.* And having perform'd this, he ceas'd to live: *All is finiſh'd,* ſays he, *and he gave up the Ghoſt.*

3. As to the choice of things of this World, and to which he gave preferrence; 'tis evident, he prefer'd Poverty before Riches, Humiliation and Abjection before State and Magnificence; the avoiding the Pleaſures of this World before the Enjoyment of them: And his choice being not mixt with neceſſity or force, but wholy voluntary, and without any poſſibility of miſtake, being himſelf the infinit Wiſdom and Sovereign Truth, hence 'tis a conſequence unqueſtionable, that the Privation of theſe Worldly things is in it ſelf better than the Poſſeſſion of them.

4. As to his Sufferings, he finds, that tho' his principal end was to ſatisfie the Divine Juſtice for the ſins of Men; yet, beſides this, 'twas to give us example, to let no Human terror force us from our Duty, but amidſt all difficulties, ever to maintain the intereſt of Juſtice

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and Truth; 'twas to convince us, that Innocence is no security against Suffering in this life: and that we might not be discourag'd when brought to the Trial, therefore Jesus Innocent puts himself at the Head of all that are thus to suffer, and says to them; *Follow me.*

In this manner the true Christian Contemplates the Humble Charity of Jesus, that is, his infinit love both to God and Man, accompanied with a most perfect, profound and entire Humility, in the practice of all those particulars here recommended to us by St. *Peter*; from this Original he frames in his Soul the best Idea of Christianity; and tho' he discovers in it a perfection far above all he can pretend to practice; yet he is very careful, not to let the desires, the fancies, the corruption of such miserable Creatures as we are, so to alter his judgment, as to approve any method of a Christian life contrary to this, or to efface those Truths, he has thus receiv'd from the Example and Life of Christ: by these he regulates his esteem and disesteem of Worldly things; by these he hopes to Sanctifie Christ in his Heart. 'Tis he is the Light of the World, and not the World to its self. He desires to keep as close

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to this Light, as the infirmity and unhappy circumſtances of his life will permit; and whenever he departs from it, 'tis from thee, O Jeſus, who know'ſt all his weakneſs, he hopes for Pardon and Mercy. For as thou art the Light to guide, ſo thou art Mercy to forgive.

VI. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 6. V. 3. ends V. 11.

Conſider your ſelves dead to ſin, and alive to God in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. Beſides the general Tribute of Death to be paid by all, that are born into this World, there's another death peculiar to Chriſtians, without which, they cannot be alive in Chriſt. For as there's no ariſing to a life Eternal, without dying firſt; ſo there can be no true living in Chriſt, even in this World, without coming to it by death, and that is the death here mention'd by the Apoſtle,

Apostle, *to wit*, the dying to sin. This death is begun in Baptism, by which, as St. *Paul* here says, *we are buried together with Christ*, not only, by being cover'd with the water of the Font, to represent his death, but also to shew our own dying to the corruption of *Adam*, which we there renounce, as to all its sinful effects, and promise to consummate this death, by renouncing the same, in fulfilling the promises there made, all our lives; and whoever is so unhappy, as to live in the total forgetfulness of those engagements, seeking those very corruptions, to which they solemnly promised to die, such may flatter themselves with the name of Christian, but are really as far from the truth of being so, as they are from being faithful to the Contract there Seal'd in the presence of God and his Church. For when a person, to become a Christian, abjures all correspondence with the Enemies of his Soul, he can no longer be esteem'd to live a Christian, than he fulfils the conditions, upon which he was admitted; and if afterwards, either by words or actions, he has any Communication with the things he has renounc'd, he violates his Oath, is unfaithful in his Allegiance, revokes his

word given to God, and as *Tertull.* says, abjures in fact the name of Christian and breaks the Seal. *Christianum nomen ejuramus, & rescindimus signaculum.*

Considering then the promise we make at the Font; First of renouncing the Devil, in avoiding him and all his Snares: Secondly, of hating the World in avoiding its Pomps and dangerous Liberties: Thirdly, in detesting all such works, as are the violation of God's Law; 'tis very evident, how a Christian ought to consider himself dead in this life, since he ought to be so arm'd with a kind of hardness and almost insensibility, in regard of the things of this World, that, like one dead, he receive little or no impression from whatever is delightful in it, and abide unmov'd amidst all its Charms; so that as motion is an argument of life, so by his not moving, may ground some hopes of his being dead, as the Apostle requires. 'Tis thus he ought to be when Curiosity and Vanity call upon him: when Temptations and ill Company solicite him; when the Provocation of Contempt or Injustice press on him; when the Thoughts of Ease or Honour court him. For as the having the Eyes

Ears and Heart open to such incitements of Passion and Sense, is a sign of a Sensual Life prevailing in such a Soul, while in its motions and actions it depends on the impression of such sensible and corrupt objects: So truly, there can be no better Argument of this Christian death here requir'd, than upon the violent and repeated provocations of the same objects, to abide wholy obstinate (and in some manner unmov'd) against them. Not that it can be expected, as long as we have our Senses and sensible faculties, not to feel some sudden and surprising satisfactions and aversions; for these being natural, cannot possibly be prevented, till the happy change of our State shall deliver us from this corruption: but that a Soul hold so far the dominion in its own Will, as never voluntarily to entertain, or act upon such impressions; for the life of the Soul being in the Will, as long as this yields not, but remains unmov'd, so long may the Soul be properly said to be without motion, and consequently morally dead.

This moral death in regard of all that is sinful or evidently dangerous, the good Christian ever labours to preserve, because in this consists the fulfilling the Contract made with Almighty

ty God at his Baptism; without this, he knows, he is false to his promise, he is faithless and unjust; and therefore upon the first suggestion of all that belongs to the sinful Pomps of the World, the Works of the Flesh and the Devil, he ever answers with that first word, he spoke by his God-father at the Font, *I renounce you*; I have lifted my self under Christ's Standard; I there engag'd my Word and my Faith to have no commerce with his Enemies; I must be true to this promise; for otherwise I forfeit all right to the Christian name, and to that eternal Inheritance, which God has prepar'd for those that serve him. I see by the Gospel, that those, who are receiv'd into Bliss, are welcom'd under that Character of *Good and Faithful Servants: Euge serve bone & Fidelis.* If then I be not Faithful, what can I expect, but to be cast out into utter darkness? If I first abjure the Pomps of the World, and afterwards seek them, run after them, and am in love with them: If I renounce the Devil, and afterwards enter into league with him and serve him: If I declare solemnly against all his Works, and then give a pleasing Ear to his suggestions, follow his motions, engage in his

is cause against the Law of God, encourage others to take part with him by my words and example; if I promote what is dangerous, encourage all that is ensnaring and sinful; what is this, but Treachery and Infidelity? And what reward can I expect of the Faithful Servant, if thus in the general course of my life, I am false and unfaithful? I know, if a Servant should prove thus faithless in my House, in wholy neglecting the concern he had undertaken, and contemning my Commands; I should not regard him as my Servant, but turn him out of doors: If a Souldier should list himself, and afterwards be found betraying his Soveraign to an Enemy, he would not only lose his Pay, but suffer as a Traytor: this I know; and will not this be my doom, if having solemnly contracted with my God, I serve not him, but the World and the Devil? Except I think him blind, that he sees not what I do, or unjust in being the rewarder of evil.

If then I think to be what I have undertaken and profess, I must live dead to Sin and the World, as I have engaged at my Baptism; I must ever renounce, what I have there once renounced; the rule and measure of my whole life,

life, must be the Protestations I there made: and that is, to be deaf, blind, dumb and insensible, in regard of all that is Corruption, and endeavour to be alive only to God in Christ; to live by the Spirit of Christ, and thus to acquit my self of the obligations I undertook at the Font, by a life of Innocence and Holiness in relation to God; of Charity and love in regard of my Neighbour, and of Mortification and Penance, as to my self. This is not the life of the World, but 'tis the life of Christ: that I have abjur'd, this I have undertaken; finish in me, O God, by thy Holy Spirit, what I have begun thro' thy Grace; grant that I may be dead to sin, and as I have promis'd, be alive only to Thee.

VII. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 6. V. 19. to the end.

As you have made your Members ſerve uncleanneſs and iniquity;— So make them now ſerve to Juſtice for your Sanctification. This was what St. *Paul* exacted from thoſe, whom he deſir'd to be converted to God; and ſince the Morality of the Goſpel is as unchangable as its Faith, this ſame muſt be requir'd now; and without it there can be no converſion. They are call'd *Converts*, who abjuring the Errors, in which they have liv'd, embrace the true Faith, but if with the change of their Faith, they change not their Lives too, they are no Converts of St. *Paul* or the Goſpel; becauſe the Goſpel requires no leſs the one than the other. I am a Convert, ſays one, and he ſhews it in the Profeſſion of his Faith: I enquire into his life, and find him as ſlothful, as forgetful of God as before; I find him

engag'd in the same corruptions of Drinking, of Gaming, of Swearing, of Cozening, of Frauds, of neglect of Family, of Prodigality, of Passion, or other vicious Liberties as before. And is this to be a Convert? Truly, 'tis a way of becoming a kind of Catholick without being a Christian: a way too many take, whilst upon their Conversion, they only consider, what they are to believe; but never seriously demand of Almighty God, with St. *Paul*, *Domine, quid vis ut faciam. Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* In this point therefore, I think great care ought to be us'd, to instruct all beginners, not only in the Creed, but likewise in all the Commandments of God, and most particularly in the Spirit of the Gospel and of Christ; to inform them of all the Rules of Humility, Meekness, Charity, Patience, Purity, and Christian Suffering; that so their Faith and Manners may be chang'd together; and thus giving evidence of their Conversion, in the new method of their lives, they may be esteem'd and truly be perfect Converts.

But this part, I am told, is reserv'd to be the work of their *Confession*, and by means of this the great change of their lives is to be effected. And truly a great

great change may be expected hence, if they do it as they ought: but how can this be, if they are not well inform'd of the Morality and Spirit of the Gospel? without this they cannot discover, how they have offended against it, or know how to amend and conform their lives to it; for want of this, they are left to learn it from the example of others of the same Communion, and hence are expos'd to all the Principles of those they converse with, which too often are very different, if not contrary to what the Gospel teaches; but not easily suspected by them, who generally think themselves secure enough, in doing what they see others do. And therefore that Pastor, who labours not, by a timely instruction, to prevent this miscarriage in those, who commit themselves to his conduct, seems either little sensible of the great corruption of the World, authorised by common practice and custom, or too little concern'd for their Souls and his own, in letting them run the hazard of being taught their Duty by Example. And tho' such, who having the opportunity, take pains, by weekly Exhortations and Catechising, to instruct their Flock in all Moral Duties, are not wanting

wanting to this important obligation; yet what can their plea be, who perform nothing of this part of their Function, and use no other means to supply it? Will not all the ignorance, with all its criminal consequences, in as many Souls as are under their care, be one day charg'd upon them?

Let the point here mention'd by St. *Paul* be the instance of the great defects there may be in Penitents, as to a perfect Conversion, if the Pastor's Instruction does not timely prevent them. 'Tis by Confession and a sincere Repentance they are taught to make their peace with God, and obtain Pardon of their sins. And how often is it, Converts, and others make use of this help in going to Confession, and seem secure of Pardon, who as often as they go, carry with them, I don't say the same Imperfections, but the same weight of crimes; and this for months and years, thinking and seemingly resolving to amend; but without ever using a due care necessary for their amendment; being never willing to take the pains proportion'd to the difficulty of their work, or suffer such Mortifications or Self-denials in the avoiding of sin and its occasions, without which 'tis im-

impossible they should ever be reclaim'd? In this there's a very great evil, in the undue, if not Sacrilegious use of the Sacraments, by never heartily setting the Ax to the Root, nor purifying the Heart from its habitual corruption: and tho' this must be charg'd on their own neglect and blindness; yet how great a part proceeds from want of a due instruction in this days Lesson? Of this, God is the Witness, and he will be the severe Judge in as many Pastors, as have been really wanting in this Duty to their Flock. That easiness in giving Absolution to the unprepar'd, who bring with them no arguments of a sincere Conversion, will then appear fruitless to the Receivers; and its dismal effects will be manifest in those, who have thus cast Pearl to Swine, in their rash and promiscuous dispensing of the Mysteries of God.

Again, how many betray still a farther ignorance as to this point, whilst upon a sincere Repentance, they truly resolve to change their lives, but think little of proportioning the works of their Conversion to the measure of their Crimes? They confess and amend and live within the bounds of Duty, and thus far well. But is there to be no difference

ference between Penitents, whose lives have been Criminal, and those, who in comparison of them, may be esteem'd Innocent? Those, who have kept neareſt to Innocence, are oblig'd to live within the bounds of every Duty; and muſt those do no more, who by their Scandals and Vices have propagated and given authority to ſin? The Primitive Church ever requir'd more, & the nature of true Penance is not ſubject to change. St. *Paul* here ſeems to require more, when exacting a kind of proportion, he commands, that *As they have ſerv'd iniquity, ſo,* upon their repentance, *they ſhould ſerve Juſtice*: this is a juſtice due to God, whom they have diſhonour'd, to the Church and their Neighbour, to make ſatisfaction, by their more exemplary lives, for the many ſins they have occaſion'd by their former liberties and ill example: Thus the meaſure of Sin ought ever be the meaſure of Repentance. Hence the Church-man, who by neglect or the unedifying method of his life, has been injurious to the Flock, upon the ſenſe of his fault, is oblig'd by more than ordinary diligence, Faſting, Praying, Watching, and moſt laborious endeavours, to repair the injury he has done.

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He that has offended by his notorious Excesses, is not only to be Temperate, for this the most Innocent are bound to; but, by painful Mortifications, punish himself in a most exemplary Self-denial, for the encouragement of that Virtue, against which he has offended. They, who have transgressed through the violence of their Carnal Passions, by their Immodesty, their Lightness and Vanity, must not only reform to the rules of an exact Modesty, for this is the Duty of the Innocent; but strictly renouncing every thing that is vain, endeavour to discourage all those liberties, Modes, Diversions and Expences, which, tho' at a distance, are yet dispositions for the laying the Soul open to Vice. This ought to be the method of the Prodigal, of the Covetous, of the Prophane, of the Unjust, and of all manner of Sinners, when they return to God. And do thou, O God of Mercy, inspire thy Servants, who seriously think of returning to thee, with this Lesson of St. *Paul*: Grant they may be entirely converted, not only in forsaking their evil ways, but so far contributing to thy Glory, by the exemplarity of their lives, as they have before dishonour'd thee and thy Church by their

Vices,

Vices. Give likewise to all Pastors the Spirit of Knowledge and Zeal, that thy Flock may be instructed in all necessary Duties, and none perish thro' their ill Conduct, who are put over them.

VIII. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 8. V. 12. ends V. 17.

VVE *are not debters to the Flesh, to live according to the Flesh.* There is a debt we owe our Bodies, in providing them what may be necessary for the support of their Being and Health; this is a general charge given to all, and 'tis the *Justice of God* obliges all to this care. On this motive we are to take both Food and Physick, and subject our selves to the remedies of all other necessities. By this motive, when it is sincere, we have the daily opportunity of Sanctifying our most ordinary actions, which seeming

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to regard nothing but the Body, at the ſame time are all acts of Juſtice and the payment of a debt, with which God has charg'd us. And tho' few are wanting in theſe Duties, yet how few are they, that perform them on this motive; ſince all that is generally done for Pleaſure and Self-love, which ought to proceed as the effect of that Obedience we owe to God and his Juſtice?

There's again another debt we owe our Bodies, and that is to conduct them ſafe to that end, for which they were created: for 'tis God's Will, all things ſhould come to that end, for which they were made. Now our Bodies being deſign'd for happineſs; 'tis our part ſo to defend them from that eternal death, which waits to devour them; as to render them at the end Immortal and Glorious: This we have undertaken, this we owe our Bodies; and 'tis an act of Juſtice to ſatisfie this debt: but to diſcharge our ſelves of this debt we owe the Fleſh, we muſt not live according to the Fleſh; for this being corrupt, with all its Inclinations and Deſires, to live according to it, would be the certain way to carry it very wide of its end, and make it, inſtead of being happy, eternally miſerable. Hence

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the Christian, looking forward towards that end, for which, thro' the infinit goodness of God, he was created, is to regard and esteem only that as Good and his greatest interest, which puts him forward on his way, and advances him to that end; all this, of whatever kind it be, he is to seek, embrace, and with all diligence pursue: and since, in all the inclinations to pleasure and a sensual life, he finds a certain malignity, which, if not prevented, will certainly deprive him of that better life he hopes for in Bliss, therefore he cannot look on them otherwise, than as a certain malady or distemper of Soul and Body, which he is oblig'd, not to enflame and encrease, but with all possible Remedies to moderate, abate and heal. Hence he is bound to have the same regard in treating his Body, as if he had undertaken the care of some sick person: and as in this case, to give the Party every thing he desires, that would do him injury as to his distemper, and make him take nothing proper for his cure, would be nothing less than a notorious Injustice and Cruelty: So truly would he be equally unjust and cruel to himself, if upon observing the pernicious inclinations of Soul and Body,

dy, he should gratifie them in their desires, and not use due means to cure or prevent the growth of these evils, to which they are subject: upon this head, Mortification and the privation of Pleasures appear to be a Duty of Justice: and the Intemperate Man is not only unjust to his charge, when he will not deny himself Pleasures that are unlawful; but likewise when he gives the Reins to his Inclinations, to the enjoyment of all those Liberties, that are reputed lawful: because, tho' Physick and Remedies are not absolutly necessary in themselves, but only in case of Sickness; so neither are Mortification and Self-denial, but where there is some Distemper in the Soul: and in this case, he would be as unjust in the omission of them, as if he should let his Body be consum'd by a dangerous Gangrene, for want of applying fit Remedies for its cure.

On this consideration we are to frame an Idea of the lives of Men very different from what is generally conceiv'd. Those persons, who are austere and mortified, denying themselves in the ordinary satisfactions and enjoyments of this life, pass in the reputation of the World, as Enemies of their

their Bodies; and yet these are they, who love them best and most to the purpose: all they do, being to heal their Distempers, to extinguish in them, as much as is possible, the seeds of corruption and death, to render them Immortal, Incorruptible and Glorious: they follow the directions prescrib'd by the most skilful of all Physicians, who is Jesus Christ, and practis'd by himself, not for the necessity he had of them, but for our example; and by all his followers, who are truly wise, that is, wise to Salvation: and tho' it be a course seemingly difficult, yet truly 'tis much easier than what we see daily undertaken and practis'd for the recovery of Corporal Health. Those Christians then that observe this method, are the the true lovers of their Bodies, because they labour to obtain for them not passing satisfactions, but the only solid and substantial goods: and God, who obliges them to this Justice, does it on a motive of Mercy towards them, because he sees, this is the true way to secure them against everlasting evils.

On the contrary, they are real Enemies to their Bodies, treat them not only unjustly, but even inhumanly, who flatter and carress them; and endeavour

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to satisfie all the inclinations they have to the enjoyment of Worldly Pleasures. For what greater Cruelty, what method more becoming the most malicious of Enemies, than to be thus industrious in giving poyson to their own Bodies, and daily preparing them for infinit and endless Torments? Whoever should design to break them a Leg or an Arm, or even any ways disfigure them, would be certainly mark'd for an Enemy; and what more favourable Character can they give themselves, who thus rashly run into Precipices, and by their Extravagant Liberties are daily drawing an eternal destruction on the whole? And yet this is the business o the Voluptuous, and of all those, who court the World and pass their lives in the enjoyment of its pleasures: 'tis this they also put to the hazard, who purposely decline all Self denials, and cannot bear what is necessary to mortifie those Passions, which are continually carrying them out of the way. So that this Advice of the Apostle is not the concern of those only, whose lives are notoriously Criminal; but of as many as experience in themselves the effects of corruption, and that is of all. For the works of the Flesh are of a very large

large extent, there being no sort of Passion, Affection or Desire, no kind of Excess, Disorder or Practice, which is contrary to any Command of God, or any ways interfers with a Christian's Duty, but what is comprehended under this head: and whoever they be, that live either in the Practice or Encouragement of any such disorder, nay, who do not seriously labour by proportion'd Self-denials, to overcome it, all these may be said to live according to the Flesh, are paying what is no debt, and will be found wanting in the discharge of that most just Duty, they owe their Bodies, in rendering them Immortal and Happy: for 'tis St. *Paul* says it in the Spirit of God; *If you live according to the Flesh, you shall die: but if by the Spirit, you mortifie the deeds of the Flesh, you shall live.* This is a task we have all undertaken; grant therefore, O God of Mercy, we may so truly understand our Eternal Interest, that mortifying in our selves all those inclinations, which are the effects of Corruption, and flatter our Senses, we may take that more disagreeable way to our Flesh, which is prescrib'd in thy Gospel, and suggested by thy Spirit, and thus abundantly find the recompence

pence of all our Self-denials in the enjoyment of that glorious life we hope for and thou haſt promis'd.

IX. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 10. V. 6. ends V. 13.

THeſe things happen'd to them (the Jews) *in a Figure, that we may not abandon our ſelves to evil deſires, as they did.* The Apoſtle, in this Chapter, having number'd up the great Mercies of God ſhewn to the *Jews*, as likewiſe the many Tranſgreſſions of that People in neglect and contempt of all his Helps and Favours, then adds this Charitable advice to us, That all this was a Figure, and that in them we may read our Fate, if we follow the example of their Crimes. They were all Baptis'd, under the conduct of *Moſes*, in the Cloud and in the Sea; they all eat of the ſame Spiritual Food, they all drank of the water of that Spiritual Rock, which

which follow'd them, who was Christ; and yet of that great number, there were very few found pleasing to God, but almost all perish'd in the Desart, and never came to the Land of Promise. Now 'tis very evident, the Cloud and the Sea were a Figure of our Baptism, the *Manna* and Water of the Rock were a Figure of the *H. Eucharist*; and so all this happen'd to them in Figure: and, no question, but, as St. *Paul* observes, the severity of God's anger on the sinful *Jews*, was likewise a Figure of that severity God will shew to wicked Christians; and their partaking of his Holy Sacraments, *Baptism* and the *Eucharist*, will not secure them against as universal an Exclusion from the Land of Promise, as was that of the *Jews*, if they imitate that Rebellious and Stiff-necked People in their Infidelity and Wickedness: for thus far the Allusion, here made by the Apostle, seems to reach; and there's nothing but the exemplary and truly virtuous lives of Christians can possibly prevent the fulfilling this part of the Figure with the rest: for as the Helps and Mercies of God towards Christians far exceed those of the *Jews*, in the same degree will the rigors of his Justice be more severe,

severe, if we suppose in Christians a resemblance of *Jewish* crimes. And, O God, how great reason have we to fear in this point, since the face of Christendom seems to shew us as universal a Rebellion against God, as was that in the Desart! What is it this more disciplin'd part of the World runs after, but Interest, Ambition and Pleasure? Vanity, Pride and Excess is every where in repute; Injustice, Fraud and overreaching one another is a general practice: Lying, Murmuring, Envy and Contentions are authorised by custom: Ascend in Spirit, says St. *Cyprian*, to the top of a high Mountain, from whence thou may'st take a review of the World, and cast thy Eyes, if thy Tears will give thee leave, on Sea and Land, on Palaces, Markets, Houses and Tribunals, and thou wilt behold such an infinit multitude of Sins, of Lies, Calumnies, Cheats, Perjuries, Envy, Vanity: so great a forgetfulness of God, and contempt of Salvation, as if there were no prospect of another life. Thou wilt see the greatest part of Men living like Brutes, following the violence of their Passions, without regard to Justice or Reason, as if there were nothing more than to be born and to die. There thou

thou wilt see the Innocent oppress'd, the Guilty encourag'd, the Wicked advanc'd, the Good contemn'd, and that in all business Favour goes farther than Virtue. Thou wilt see the Laws sold, Truth despis'd, Modesty lost, Arts, Professions and Offices corrupted, Money commanding, Interest governing, and a general homage paid to Dependance; finally, thou wilt see Vice so publick, that it passes for lawful for being publick: *Consensere Jura peccatis, & cæpit esse licitum, quod publicum.* Is not this the true Character of our disordered World; each Sex, every Age and Quality, whether Ecclesiastic or Laick, having their peculiar corruptions; all admiring and censuring their Neighbours; but very few, that see their own Faults, and much fewer, that truly take pains to reform them! Is there not then too great reason to fear, that this part of the Figure will be fulfill'd with the others, and that this universal Rebellion will be follow'd with as universal an Exclusion from the Land of the Living?

And tho' there are great numbers of Pious Christians, who being exempt from this general corruption, may hope to be distinguish'd from this Mass of the

the Wicked, yet this Hope, however it may leſſen, does not yet wholy remove our fears: becauſe the Grace of God is not only loſt by Corporal and Notorious ſins, from which theſe have an aſſurance of being free, but likewiſe by Pride, Envy, Spiritual Sloth, Self-love, and by any ſinful adheſion to things of this World. We know of no Corporal or Publick Crimes committed by the Phariſees; nay, we know, they were exact obſervers of the Law, and nice in every thing that had relation to the Worſhip and Service of God: and yet Chriſt declares, they ſhould be more rigorouſly puniſh'd than the reſt of the *Jews*. Their only ſin was that of Pride and Hypocriſie, and very likely ſuch, as was not obſerv'd, if not wholy unknown to them. For this they were excluded: and who knows, how many Chriſtians there may be living with the reputation of Sanctity, by their abhorring every thing that can give offence, & yet interiorly no better than Phariſees, and with them to have their Eternal Portion? Again, the *Capbernaits*, who were a People no ways remarkable for any ſort of extravagancy above their Neighbours, are yet threatn'd with a

more rigorous judgment than those *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, Towns defil with the most abominable crimes, a this for the only sin of neglect and i gratitude, in not making a good use the Favours Christ had done them, working so many Miracles in their sigh Now who knows, how many Chris ans seemingly good, may be yet r proach'd with the same charge of n glect and ingratitude, in not havin laid hold on, or improv'd the oppo tunities God had often given them f their good; and that for the sole abu of God's Favours, they may be cast ou with the *Capharnaits*, with those of *S dom* and *Gomorrah*? Lastly, Since w find the guilt of those unhappy one who shall be plac'd on the left hand o the Judge, is not contracted by Corpo ral or Scandalous sins, but only by th omission of Duties and of the works o Mercy: since we see the Vices princ pally threatn'd in the Gospel, are Sp ritual ones. as the abuse of God Grace and Word, Ambition, Pride, C vetousness Tepidity, &c. and the Vi tues there chiefly recommended are in terior, regarding the inward Man, a the Love of Enemies, Reserv'dness i judging, being dead to the World, r

nouncing

nouncing Human Satisfactions, Humility, Charity, Vigilance in Prayer, a Zeal for Justice, Simplicity of Heart, &c. Since, I say, we find the Grace of God and Salvation depending on these interior dispositions, have we not reason to fear, that of those, in whom no exterior wickedness or extraordinary disorder was ever known, there will be many, who being judg'd by the Searcher of Hearts, will be found guilty, and for their more Spiritual sins, cast out into utter darkness?

I say not this, to make any despond or fright them into despair; but, as we have reason to hope in God's Mercy, so to lay before Christians the motives they have to fear his Justice; for this fear destroys not that confidence we ought to have in his Goodness, but rather helps to establish it, since this very fear is one of the greatest effects of his Mercy, and the greater this is, the more reason we have to hope, he will regard us with a favourable Eye; we are to fear him then, because he is to be fear'd, and because we certainly know not, whether Charity or Concupiscence reigns in our Heart: but this fear is not to deject or discourage us in our Christian Duties, but rather to

awaken and make us less confident in our own strength, and more watchful in all our ways; and this is the surest way to prevent the fulfilling this part of the Figure; or that we be no part of it at least, if thro' the wickedness of Christians, it be to be fulfill'd. Grant then, O God that the severity of thy Justice executed upon the *Jews*, may be a means of directing us to thy Mercy; and that what has been writ for our correction, may have that good effect, as seriously to put us on a Reformation; for 'tis only by avoiding the sins of that People, we can hope to escape their punishment:

X. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 12 V. 2. ends V. 11.

YOU know, when you were Heathens, how you were led after dumb Idols. Wherefore I declare to you, that no Man speaking in the Spirit of God, can pronounce Anathema

Anathema against Jesus, and no Man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Running after dumb Idols is not a Christian practice, and whoever does it, is a Heathen, is at defiance with God, and, whatever his Belief be, in fact pronounces Jesus accursed. But however, as in the regenerate there is a natural corruption, which raises a Contradiction and War against all other Virtues, and even such Duties as are most indispensable; so there are Seeds of Infidelity, which sometimes shoot forth in contradiction to Faith and that Holy Belief they are bound to have of God and his most Sacred Truths. And as it is the Spirit of God, that establishes and secures them in the Principles and Practice of Christian Duties; as it was the Spirit of God, by whose work and power the Christian Faith was first planted in the World and in their Hearts; so it must be the effect of the same Holy Spirit, to defend it against all temptations and assaults of an incredulous temper or malicious World. God, in the establishing the Christian Faith, sufficiently provided against all doubts; 1. When he confirm'd the Truth of Christ's Preaching by the evidence of Miracles, when he approv'd

from Heaven, what Christ taught, and at the same time gave us an assurance, above all question of private reason, what we were bound to believe: 2. When Christ arose from the dead, manifesting himself to above five hundred Brethren at once, and in this giving proof of his Doctrine above all suspicion; since it was in the power of any one of that number to have discover'd it, had it been an Imposture; especially too having the encouragement of all Human motives to do it, and nothing but the force of a certain truth to put them upon publishing and attesting the Miracle. 3. When Christ sent twelve Fisher-men, Poor, Ignorant and unprovided of all Human Talents and Helps, to Reform and Convert the whole World, to change their Opinions and Actions, to make them detest what they had ador'd, hate what they had lov'd, renounce all present satisfactions in hopes of a future life: The infinit disproportion of this undertaking with Human strength, considering what Men they were, shews they were evidently convinc'd of their Commission being Divine, and of the unquestionable assurance they had of a Heavenly Assistance promis'd them for the execution

cation of it. For without this certainty, how could they have engag'd in this infinit work? without the evidence of Chriſt's Reſurrection, and the preſence of his Spirit, how could they, now divided throughout the World, have ſo unanimouſly Preach'd the ſame truths, and with one conſent ſuffer all manner of extremities, and lay down their lives in teſtimony of what they had taught? And now we having ſeen the prodigious effects of this Order of Chriſt riſen from the dead, in the Church propagated over the World, in Paganiſm deſtroy'd, in the Truth receiv'd; nothing can be more contrary to reaſon, than after the accompliſhment of ſo wonderful a work, to doubt of its being the effect of the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of Chriſt. The evident certainty of theſe Myſteries was a ſolid ground to the Apoſtles not to doubt of ſucceſs in the Execution of his Orders: and the ſucceſs of their Preaching and Suffering is a ſolid ground to eſtabliſh Chriſtians of all Ages in the Faith of thoſe Myſteries. 4. When Chriſt, ſending his Apoſtles to Convert the World, promis'd he would manifeſt his Authority and Power in them, by their ſpeaking

in divers Tongues, by their curing Diseases and casting out Devils; 'tis impossible they should have continu'd to believe in him, if they had seen no effects of what he had foretold and promis'd: 'tis more impossible they should so unanimously have given their lives to attest the truth of that Religion, which they had found to be an Imposture. Those Miracles then did happen, as was foretold; Therefore Jesus is truly risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven, who promis'd to give these Miraculous proofs in testimony of his being the *Messias*, and of the truth of what he taught: Therefore the Christian Religion is true; and we have reason to bless the infinit Goodness of God, who has left us such evidence in a point of this concern, whereon our Eternity depends.

Now tho' these motives, with many others, may be a full Conviction to Human Reason of this Truth, yet none can sincerely say, That Jesus is the Lord, but in the Spirit of God. For where a Soul is not animated from above with a sincere desire of finding and knowing the Truth, but effectually lies under the prejudices of corrupt Nature and the blindness of Passion, the evidence

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of Reason is darkness to such an one, and the greatest Miracles are altogether unprofitable and without effect. The sad experience of this we see in the Scribes and Pharisees, and almost all the *Jews*: The strongest motives of Reason and Authority were render'd useless by their Corruption and Insincerity, and the greatest Wonders of the Divine Power prevail'd nothing on them, who obstinately interpreted every thing in favour of those Principles, which Pride and Prepossession had rooted in them. Those who were Witnesses of the Miracles, by a sinister exposition damp'd all their force. Such as heard them by report, took not the pains to examin the truth: others believ'd them false without enquiring: for Sloth and Prejudice find it easier to believe things false, than to make any search there, where an unexpected evidence is like to prove very troublesome in its consequence, by obliging them to suspect that, which Education and Passion will not give them leave to disown or forsake. Thus the weakest Reasons are sufficient to hold a Soul (that is not sincere) in all its prejudices, and the strongest are not sufficient to make him abandon them.

Hence appears the neceſſity of the Gift of Faith, the firſt effect of which, is to inſpire a Soul with the love of Truth, and put him on making a ſincere enquiry after it; this will not permit him to ſet up his own private Sentiments for a Standard, approving and condemning every thing, as it ſuits or diſagrees with theſe; for this may be too often the effect of Obſtinacy, inſtead of Faith, and from one ill Principle may make way for endleſs and irrecoverable Errors; but it makes him indifferent to all he already ſeems to know; ſo that weighing every thing according to the ſtrength of motives, with an unbias'd hand, he is ready to renounce all Prepoſſeſſions, whatever they be, wherever the weight of Certainty turns the Ballance: Such a diſpoſition as this evidently proceeds from a ſincere deſire of Truth, and whoever thus ſearches for it, engages Providence to direct him to it; God's Goodneſs cannot withſtand the ſincerity of ſuch an enquiry; but as he has promis'd, will certainly be found, by thoſe that ſeek him thus; this is already the effect of Faith, and an eſtabliſh'd and conſummate Faith will be the Reward and Fruit of ſuch a Search. For where Obſtinacy,

ſtinacy, Pride, and Self-love are laid aſide; where Education, conveniencies of life and all Human reſpects are ſo far renounc'd, as to be in a preparation of being ſurrender'd to the force of Truth; there Earth being abandon'd, Heaven muſt govern; there the Spirit of the World being diſclaim'd, the Spirit of God muſt neceſſarily command; and none in the Spirit of God can ſay *Anathema* to Jeſus. He'll poſſeſs whom he has look'd for, and by him be led into all Truth. And tho' a Chriſtian, when eſtabliſh'd in the Truth, is ſtill expos'd to variety of aſſaults from Curioſity, Pride, and the vain Deſire of being Wiſe beyond the bounds of Sobriety; yet, while the Heart is firm, theſe workings of an ungovern'd Imagination can do no injury to Faith, which like other Virtues, is generally more confirm'd than prejudic'd from ſuch attempts of a troubleſome Enemy. He that is truly Humble, and builds his Security on God's Truth, and the promis'd aſſiſtance of his Spirit, may be unconcern'd and even contemn the weakneſs of theſe Snares, as not doubting, but the ſame Sincerity and dependance on God, which brought him to the light, will ever preſerve him in the ſecure Poſſeſſion of it. XI.

XI. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 15. V. 1. ends V. 10.

Brethren, I declare to you the Goſpel, which I have Preach'd to you and you have receiv'd, and in which you ſtand firm: by which alſo you are ſav'd, if you remember in what manner I have Preach'd unto you; otherwiſe you have believ'd in vain. 'Tis by the Goſpel Chriſtians are to be ſav'd: by this we have the knowledge of eternal Happineſs, and endleſs Miſery; by this we are taught the way to eſcape the one, and inherit the other: by this we learn Jeſus Chriſt, thro' whom alone we are to obtain the poſſeſſion of everlaſting Bliſs and be deliver'd from all evils; by this we are inſtructed how to love Jeſus Chriſt, in the clear diſcovery of his infinit Mercy and Goodneſs, in all he has done and ſuffer'd for us: And whoever loves him not, has not yet fully receiv'd the Goſpel; it being not the words of it in the

the Memory, but its Doctrin in the Heart, that is to work our Salvation. For the Heart being the Seat of Good and Evil, all the saving Remedies of the Gospel, however powerful in themselves, if they enter not there, are not capable of giving Health to our Souls: in this manner then it is the Gospel is to save us.

And now since it has pleas'd the infinit Goodness of God to let us have this Doctrine of Salvation committed to Writing for our Comfort, Edification and Instruction, what great reverence ought Christians to have to that Sacred Volume, never taking it into their Hands, but with a respect due to the Mercies it contains, and with a sincere desire of being refresh'd and comforted with the Waters of that Fountain of Life; thence to be possess'd with a true Sense of God's Goodness, a Fear of his Judgments, a Hatred for Sin, a Love of Virtue, a true value for Humility and Meekness, a Contempt of this World and its delights, and a willingness to Sacrifice this life for the purchase of a better? These Lessons are taught in every page of Holy Writ, and no question, but such as peruse it with the Dispositions of a Sincere, Docile and Humble

Humble Heart, will find the Riches of this Treasure in plenty of Heavenly Blessings, and the knowledge of that Wisdom, which will conduct them, to a happy end. But then, how careful ought Christians to be, when they come to those Mysteries, which are far above the comprehension of Human Reason? Here to determine boldly, on the confidence of their own Sense, is a great Presumption; and to conclude, they have an evident knowledge of them, is an intolerable Pride. Were Man's Reason as sound and perfect, as before *Adam*'s Fall, it might, with some degree of assurance, examin into the Divine Mysteries; but now, wounded, corrupt and blind as it is, there can be nothing, but a vain Curiosity and Rashness in all its decisions about such objects, with which it bears no proportion. And tho' they are deliver'd in Holy Writ; yet since Providence has so order'd it, that they are generally couch'd and deliver'd in such expressions, as are interpreted both by the learned and unlearned, even contrary ways, which way shall the private Reader, on the strength of his own judgment, put an end to these debates, and in every particular Mystery pronounce posi-

positively, This is certainly the Truth; this is the Sense of Christ and his Apostles? Whoever does this, comes very much indispos'd to the reading this Divine Book; whilst instead of having a true Sense of their own weakness, and humbling themselves in the presence of incomprehensible Majesty, they approach to it with Pride, and a very unjust confidence in the certainty of their own thoughts, which in regard of what they here undertake, are blindness and darkness.

And then, how rashly do they expose themselves to that Curse pronounc'd by St. *John* in the last Chapter of the *Revelations*? For if he that adds or takes away from the words of that Book, shall have his part taken out of the Book of Life; shall not they meet with the like severity, who add or take away from the *Sense* and *Meaning* of this Book; since the *Words* being only as it were the Shell, the *Sense* and *Truths* contain'd in them, are the substance of God's Word, and that which gives life to the Soul? And how obvious is it for bold Interpreters to do this; since there being but *One true Sense* of Scripture, in relation to all those important points debated amongst Christians,

Christians, whoever expounds it different from that One Sense, which is the Truth, most certainly adds or takes away from the Sense, which is the Life and Spirit of the Holy Scriptures? How inconsiderate then and truly forgetful of the depth of God's Mysteries and of their own weakness, must they be, who with a sort of groundless assurance, undertake this task, and venture the drawing down the wrath of God, by their blind presumption?

'Twas something like this, of which St. *Paul* here cautions the *Corinthians*, telling them, they were to be sav'd by the Gospel, but with this condition, if they remember'd in what manner he had Preach'd it to them, and that otherwise they would believe in vain: in this plainly declaring, that however there was Salvation in the Gospel, yet it would not be so to them, if they believ'd it not in the manner he had deliver'd it. Now the case of every Reader and Interpreter of Holy Writ, is the very same with the *Corinthians*: if they understand it otherwise than the Apostles taught it, their belief is not to Salvation, but in vain: a terrible Sentence, but what God himself has pronounc'd, and stands here recorded,

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to deter every Reader from all manner of Preſumption, inſpire them with a juſt Humility, & diſtruſt of themſelves, and put them upon ſeeking the moſt aſſured means of underſtanding it in the ſame manner, as was deliver'd by the Apoſtles; ſince none but this can poſſibly be the Doctrine of Chriſt; and whatever is not this, however ſeemingly the Senſe of Scripture, muſt unavoidably be Error and Hereſy, which as this ſame Apoſtle ſays in another place, is a ſin, that excludes from Heaven.

This then being alike the concern of all Chriſtians, every one ought ſeriouſly to examin, what aſſurance they have, that, amongſt ſo many different Expoſitions of Scripture, that Senſe in which they underſtand it, is certainly the ſame, that was taught by the Apoſtles. I know every one here will be ſo favourable to their own Judgments, as to conclude, that to be the Senſe of the Apoſtles, in which they underſtand the Scripture: but what aſſurance is this, which is nothing but the poſitiveneſs of their own thoughts; and is evidently conſiſtent with the groſſeſt Errors; ſince all the contradictory Expoſitions of Holy Writ, is ever accompanied with a poſitive belief of their being the

the Sense of the Apostles, in all the Abettors of the different Sects in the World?

What ground of certainty then can there Possibly be of believing the Scriptures in the manner, as was taught by the Apostles, if there cannot be a confidence repos'd in the positive judgments of Men after a sincere perusal and comparing of one place with another? 'Tis plain, I think, *this certainty* cannot be given by the determination of *Sincerity* and *Learning*, because there are numbers of *Learned*, and I hope, *Sincere* Men on all sides, maintaining contrary Doctrines, as the Sense of Scripture and Apostles, and all equally venturing their Salvation on the Truth of what they teach: and yet it cannot all possibly be as they say it is: and therefore *this Certainty* must necessarily come some other way: and that is, either by a delivery of the Sense of the Apostles by the Faithful of all Ages since their time, which is called, *Tradition*; or by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, certainly concurring in the Exposition of it, who may be a Security against all mistakes. These ways afford us the sureft grounds of this Certainty: For, as the Bible it self has been

been deliver'd down to us by the Faithful of all Ages, and is therefore acknowledg'd by us to be the Word of God; so by the same way the true Sense of it, as taught by the Apostles, May be deliver'd down to us; and this is to have the same Authority for the *Sense*, as we have for the *Book*. And as for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the Interpretation of Scripture, there's no question, but where there is a certainty of his guidance, there is likewise a certainty of Divine Truths contain'd in Holy Writ; since he is the best Expositor of Scripture, who first directed the Apostles in the Penning of it.

By these ways we may come to a Certainty, as to the matter propos'd: But then those, who desire to be satisfied of the Sense of Scripture, as it has been deliver'd by the Faithful in all Ages, must enquire there, where there has been a constant Succession of Faithful in all Ages; for certainly no Communion can give an authentic Testimony of a Truth having been thus believ'd and deliver'd in all Ages, which can produce no Evidence for it self, of its having been in all Ages. And those who desire to be assur'd of the Sense of

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Scripture, from the certain assistance of the H. Spirit, must enquire there, where there is a claim to this Assistance and an entire dependance on it. And since no Communion of Christians can evidence its visible Succession, Government and Authority in all Ages, but the Catholick; and no other acknowledges a certain assistance of the Holy Ghost, as Christ promis'd, for its ever teaching the Truth and perpetual security from Error, but this; I cannot find, how there can be a certain assurance of the Sense of the Holy Scriptures in the manner as was taught by the Apostles, but only in this Communion; since all others, either absolutely disown these only means capable of giving this assurance, or weakly pretend to them without proof. 'Tis thus, Blessed Apostle of the Gentiles, I have learn'd the Scriptures, thus I remember them, in the manner thou hast Preach'd them, and thus I firmly hope to be sav'd by them. Grant, Blessed Redeemer, that no Pride, Self-conceit, or fond opinion of my own private judgment may ever put me out of this way, grant the like mercy to all.

XII. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

2 *Cor.* C 3. V. 4. ends V. 9.

NOt that *we are able to think any thing of our ſelves, as of our ſelves; but our ſufficiency is from God.* There can be no ſolid hopes of advancing in a virtuous life, except this Foundation be firſt laid, that we can do no good of our ſelves, but that all is to come from God, as the effect of his Grace, even to our very Thoughts, which are the ſeed and firſt beginnings of virtue. For 'tis this grounds the Chriſtian in a true Humility, makes him ever diſtruſt in himſelf, delivers him from all Raſhneſs, Confidence and Preſumption, preſerves him in a wholſom Fear, makes him in all things depend on God, and this dependance keeps him watchful in his Duty, and apprehenſive of diſpleaſing him, who has all in his Hands. 'Tis in conſequence of this, that he is conſtant in his Prayers, and in all thoſe means, the Divine

Divine Goodneſs has appointed for obtaining his Grace; that he undertakes nothing that ſeems to be his Duty, without firſt imploring his aſſiſtance; and in indifferent things ever deſires his Protection, as knowing, by a chain of hidden conſequences, the whole State of his life, and very conſiderable engagements, many times to depend on theſe; that he is very cautious, how he expoſes himſelf to what in himſelf or others, he experiences to be the occaſion of ſin; that he carefully puts by all Complaiſance in that good he has done, as likewiſe what naturally ariſes from the Commendation or good Opinion of others, becauſe he is ſenſible, this is an injuſtice to God, in taking to himſelf what belongs to him; and finally, that he is not ſurpris'd at his own weakneſs, nor anxiouſly diſquieted at the obſervation of his repeated failings; becauſe he knows himſelf to be miſery and corruption; and there can be no wonder, that what is weak, is ſubject to weakneſſes; and if there be any wonder, 'tis what is caus'd by Pride, which is ever unwilling to acknowledge this great infirmity, and is very impatient under it.

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In this manner the knowledge and confession of our own inability and nothing, is the foundation of all Virtue, as Pride is the root of all sin; and 'tis the great Mercy of God, by variety of expedients, to preserve us in this knowledge of our selves, and, by our daily experience, to secure us against that Pride, which so naturally steals upon us for our ruin. This advantage the Divine Goodness designs us in the many and troublesom Temptations, which molest us; in that Dryness, Tepidity and seeming withdrawings of inward comfort, which often follow us; in those infirmities we fall into after our repeated and strongest Resolutions; in the darkness of our Thoughts; in our stupendous and almost universal Ignorance, as to every thing that belongs to God and our own good; in the uncertainty of our Repentance, and the doubts we labour under, in whatever we do to secure our future State; in our disappointments, afflictions, pains, sickness, and in all his Scourges. 'Tis for this same motive of humbling us, he has appointed the most effectual means of Grace in the weakest and most contemptible Elements, and obliges us to have recourse to these for our help and remedy:

remedy: for this he made choice of Poor, Ignorant and Simple Fishermen to be our Teachers, and subjects the most Learned to be their Scholars: for this has he center'd all Virtue in the contempt of whatever is esteemed great, and declar'd the Wisdom of the World to be Folly; and the Foolishness of this World to be the Wisdom he approves, and the only Security we can have of being for ever happy.

This method has God chosen to keep us humble; and amongst all Christians, only those are happy and wise, who take the advantage of all these particulars, to ground themselves in the knowledge of that nothing, which they are, and to grow daily in their dependance on God: so that, instead of thinking themselves unhappy in those things of which the World generally complains, as of Temptations, Uncertainties, Ignorance, Darkness, Infirmities, &c. they make this one use of them all, in turning them into occasions of a perpetual Humiliation under the Hand of God; and thus make them serve, as so many steps, whereby they approach still nearer to Heaven, and trust more in God, the less they have to trust in themselves. Thus their very Miseries become

become Blessings, and all co-operate to their Good.

And this, I don't question, is the design of Almighty God, in many considerable infirmities he permits in his best Servants while as yet on Earth; especially in that great darkness, dimness, and want of all Sense and Comfort, which for a long time many find in their Prayers and all Exercises of Devotion: all this being very often an excellent of Mercy, not only to try their Fidelity and Patience, in serving him without any sort of satisfaction, or signs of benefit; but also to ground them still more and more in a solid Humility, and establish them in a total dependance on him. I am very sensible how great a Trial this is, and how great Grace is necessary for their support in this State of Barrenness: and while it is Food for the Strongest, that it is apt to cause anxiety in Beginners, and even give them such discouragements, as to think all to be lost, and conclude God to be angry with them, and that for this reason he is deaf to their Prayers, and gives them over to a hard Heart and a reprobate Sense. This is too often the effect of this Trial in unexperienc'd Christians, who have

fore reason to be under the conduct of a very skilful Director, and entirely depend on his advice, and not on the Suggestions of their own fears. By such an one they will be instructed, not unprofitably to lament their Spiritual misfortune, but effectually to remove whatever in themselves they can discover to be the occasions of it: and if they can make no such discovery, then to humble themselves, and even rejoice in the experience of their own nothing, hoping that God is preparing them for signal Blessings, who thus in a particular manner convinces them, that of themselves they can do nothing: that therefore they ought to go on with courage, resolving to comply with the Will of God, who requires of them to Pray as long they live: that they must perform this as well as they can, without disquieting themselves at their imperfections; ever endeavouring to perform their obligation, without being concern'd whether it be with comfort or without comfort, whether they be in light or darkness, in joy or sadness; & this is to go on by the light of Faith, being constant in every Duty, without any recompence in this life or assurance of having done them well, but only what

what Faith gives, and not Sense: and thus suffering all the seeming withdrawings of Grace with patience, and quietly submitting to the appointments of God, they need not doubt of being as acceptable to him, as those that perform all their Exercises of Piety with a most lively and sensible Devotion; and that by owning in a profound Humility, that they cannot pray, they offer up a most acceptable Prayer.

Neither let these torment themselves with the apprehensions of God being angry with them, and of their Hearts being hardened: for it being evident, that all their trouble, anxiety and dejection, arises from no other head, than the concern they have for not serving God as they ought, and the fear of having offended him; that they earnestly desire to be deliver'd from their evils, seek and enquire for remedy, and are ever with sorrow lamenting their misfortune: 'tis very plain such Hearts as are affected with these Pious Passions, cannot be harden'd, nor possibly be the object of God's anger. No, these Hearts are certainly right with God, and tho' they are wrought upon by an excess of Apprehension; Fear and Solicitude, and are

disorder'd thro' an *indiscreet manage-ment*; yet these being rather weaknesses than sin, they have great reason to hope with an entire confidence in God, and expect, that after such a Trial, the Divine Light, attended with Heavenly Comforts, will again shine upon them and refresh their Souls. Let them be constant in all Duties, performing them with a true Humility and Sense of their own nothing, tho' without any sensible Devotion, and I question not, but all will end well; and tho' Death should carry them away even under this want of internal comfort, however it might seem terrifying to them, yet should I not doubt, upon this score, of their dying the death of the Just.

XII.

XIII. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Galat. C. 3. V. 16. ends V. 22.

THE *Promiſes were made to Abraham and his Seed.* St. *Paul* here declares and proves, that the *Jews* were not to build their hopes of Salvation on the Law given to *Moſes*, but on the *Promiſe* God made to *Abraham*, when he ſaid to him, That *in him all Nations ſhould be bleſs'd*, Gen. 12. 3. that therefore they were not to be juſtify'd by the *Law*, but by their *Faith* in a Mediator, that was to come of the Seed of *Abraham*: for that God having once made this Promiſe to him, it could not poſſibly be made void by the Law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after; and therefore was ſtill in force and to be made good; for *tho' it be but a Man's Covenant*, (ſays the Apoſtle here v. 15.) *yet if it be confirm'd, no Man diſanulleth or addeth thereto*: how much leſs then can the Covenant, that was confirm'd before of God, be diſanull'd by the Law, and made of no

effect? Thus the Apostle reasons in this Chapter at length, shewing the Promise of God to be irrevocable and as unchangable as God himself, on whom alone it depends; & that on their Faith in this, their Justification and Salvation was to depend. Here's the ground of all the Hope and Salvation belonging to the Jewish Church; their fulfilling all the Law, without the Faith of a *Messias* in consequence of God's Promise, was not sufficient. And is not this a Figure of the Covenant made by Christ with his Church? He solemnly engag'd his word, That he would be with his Apostles, until the end of the World, *Mat.* 28. 20. That the Comforter even the Spirit of Truth should abide with them for ever, *John* 14. 16. That the Spirit of Truth should come and lead them into all truth *Jo.* 16. 12. That they should be the Light of the World and Salt of the Earth. That whoever heard them, heard him, and whoever despis'd them, despis'd him, *Luke* 10. 16. This is the Promise of Christ to his Church, not only once pronounc'd, as was that of God to *Abraham*, but so many times repeated, absolutely and without any condition or reserve: and who is there can annul this Promise? God has made it,

it, who can make it void? If but a Man's Covenant be once confirm'd, no Man disanulleth it or addeth thereto: Who then can evacuate the Covenant of God thus repeated, confirm'd and establish'd? No, this is God's Word, and tho' Heaven and Earth shall pass away, yet his Word shall never pass away; but must for ever stand good, notwithstanding all Opinions, Pretexts or Laws of Men to the contrary. To build then on this Promise, is to lay a foundation on a Rock; 'tis to build on God's Truth, which is as unchangable as God: on this I stand secure, because in this I rest on God: on this my Judgment stands firm and proof against all the waverings of Human Reason; because I know all the strength of Reason is but weakness and nothing, if compar'd to God. 'Tis for this I bless God daily, who has not left me to my self, and the uncertainty of my own Thoughts, to go thro' the depth of his Mysteries, but has promis'd himself to be my Guide, and by his H. Spirit abiding with his Church, to lead me into all Truth; so that as he himself has created me, as he himself has Redeemed me, so he himself has undertaken to be my Director in all I am to believe. On

this Promise of his I entirely depend and whatever arguments are suggested to me, pretending to invalidate it, me thinks they look to me, as level'd against Christ himself; for if I am to question the truth of his Word, how can I firmly believe in him? If I cannot trust in his Promise, how can he be a God to me? His *Promise* is the ground of my *Hope*, and if I cannot depend on that, I must certainly despair: his *Promise* is the ground of my *Faith*, and if I am not to depend on that, I must certainly err in my Faith, or be an Unbeliever. But far be this from me; I confess, O my God, Thou art faithful to all thy Promises, and I believe Thee, because thou art the Eternal Truth. This Truth is the security of my Faith and my Hope: and if I once doubt of this, I in this lose all my hold in Thee; and what can I then trust to? There is nothing in this World, but Thou, my God, and thy Creatures; if I let go Thee, there are nothing but thy Creatures left me; and how can I trust in them, if by them I am taught to distrust in Thee? If I cannot depend on thy Church, which thou hast establish'd and secur'd to me by thy Sacred Word and Promise, for the teaching

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the World truth to the end of the World; how can I receive that for truth, which is only secur'd to me by the learning and word of Man? This cannot be; and therefore I profess, if Thou faileſt me, all is loſt to me; if I am to doubt of thy Promiſe, I muſt then own my ſelf miſerable, and that I have neither Faith nor Hope left within me, the only Anchor and Support in this State of Pilgrimage and Darkneſs.

Thus then is the New Covenant as well as the Old, the Chriſtian as well as the Jewiſh Church to depend on the Promiſes of God, and 'tis in the Faith of theſe is the Life of the Juſt. And now, while we behold ſo wonderful a Fidelity and Truth in God, in fulfilling all his Promiſes to Men, ought not this be an inſtruction to all Chriſtians, of the great exactneſs they are to obſerve, in ſatisfying all the Promiſes they make to God? Every Promiſe made to God ought to be moſt Religiouſly and Strictly kept, as being a Satred Tie, by which a Chriſtian obliges himſelf to renounce ſomething dangerous, and more cloſely to live to God; and the breach of it is ever accompanied with a ſort of infidelity, very unſuitable to a Chriſtian State, as being contrary to that ſimpli-

city, Sincerity and Truth, which are the Attributes of God, and without which a Soul cannot possibly be pleasing to him. And since it brings so great an obligation after it, ought not every one be very cautious, especially those of unripe and unexperienc'd years, how they engage themselves in any kind; or rather never do it, but with great deliberation and the best advice of those, that know them best? For want of this many have rashly drawn themselves into great Snares, and by the heat of a too hasty resolution of seeming good, have become a prey to the designs of a subtle but malicious Enemy, perplexing their Consciences with a weight too heavy to be easily remov'd. All private resolutions therefore are here to be suspected, however seemingly grounded on the prospect of the greatest good: And since *being directed and advis'd*, is a means appointed us by God, who knows our weakness, and by this designs to secure us against all Snares, why should this be laid aside in an affair, wherein his Honour and our Eternal Good are so much concern'd? The best advice therefore I can give in this particular, is, *That none make any Promises without ad-*

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vice; and whatever they conclude within themselves, that it be ever done with this reserve; *If it shall be approv'd by their Director, or other Party, that may be proper in such case*; and *otherwise not to stand good.* This is the surest way to prevent all rashness and delusion, and do what may be most acceptable to God.

And this is not only advisable in relation to a Religious State; but likewise in regard to all other Promises whatever, whether in order to Marriage, Office, Employment, Society or State of Life. For all these most strictly oblige, when once made, and are so great an engagement, that, generally speaking, they are never violated without a sin, and such a sin, as ever carries a great aggravation with it, and therefore ought never to be made, but with the advice of the best Friends, and serious consideration of their own dispositions compar'd with what they undertake. God likewise ought to be consulted, and his assistance earnestly implor'd by frequent Prayers and an entire abandoning their Choice to the direction of his Grace: for since no Promises can be duly observ'd, but by his help: How can they reasonably afterwards

wards expect his help, who without him have first engag'd themselves? Is it not hence, many are so very unhappy in what they do, meeting with such unexpected difficulties, which not only destroy their inward peace, but even put them too often upon living in a perpetual breach of Vow, and thus have Temporal and Eternal evils the punishment of their rashness? O, 'tis terrible to think how many dreadful mischiefs are often the consequence of one false step, whilst like a Chain of evils they follow of course upon fastning the first link, the effect of a blind and hasty resolution, made upon Carnal and Worldly Motives, but without God. Help us, O God, as far as we are concern'd in this misfortune; and as we adore thy Truth in all thy Promises, and on these build both our Faith and Hope; so likewise direct all thy Servants, in all the Vows and Promises they make: Deliver them from all rash and inconsiderate ones: Assist them in the just discharge of all they are oblig'd to by the tie of a deliberate Promise, make them sensible of all they have undertaken, that so their failing in their own Promises, may never exclude them from the Mercy of thine.

XIV.

XIV. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Galat. C 5. V. 16. ends V. 24.

THE *works of the Fleſh are manifeſt; Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Enmity, Diſſentions, Jealouſies, Animoſities, Complaints--- of which I declare to you, as I have done already, that they, who do theſe things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Had the Apoſtle here given us a Liſt only of thoſe groſſer Crimes, with which he begins his Roll, it would have likely encourag'd great numbers of Chriſtians to have entertain'd good hopes of themſelves; but when he adds amongſt the works of the Fleſh, *Enmities, Diſſentions, Animoſities*, &c. and declares theſe to have ſuch a malignity in them, as to exclude from the Kingdom of God; this carries terror along with it, and diminiſhes, I fear, very much of that number, which otherwiſe might be eſteemed ſafe. For when I conſider, how much theſe kind

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of evils reign, even amongst those, whose lives seem Regular and Pious; that there are few Families, but what have lasting Animosities within themselves, and fewer, that have not their Dissentions with their Neighbours or Relations: that every inconsiderable Misunderstanding, Punctilio, Point of Interest, seeming Affront and even Oversights and Indiscretions, are generally improv'd and made the Seed of Division; that there are scarce any of these breaches made, that are ever truly heal'd again, but only cover'd over with the counterfeit of a starch'd Civility, and upon the least touch break out again: when I reflect on the great Bitterness, and Animosity occasion'd by the diversity of Religions, and that there are very few, but what through Zeal or Ignorance, have their Hearts possess'd with Passion or even Malice against their Neighbour: when I consider, that within those Walls, which shut out the World, and are the Retirement of those Pious Souls, which seek for shelter against all sin; that even there, I say, Animosities, Envies, Quarrels, Contentions and Complaints are kept alive; and that having at once courageously renounc'd those Charms, which

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deceive the World, they fall unthinkingly into these Snares. When casting my Thoughts about, I consider these spreading evils, I then wholy surpris'd, cry out: Lord, if they that do these things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, how very few are they, that shall be sav'd; since they, that are most remarkable for Piety and a Regular life, here in this are in danger of being made a prey to a designing Enemy!

Not that I can apprehend all those immediately to forfeit their right to Heaven, who find themselves engag'd in petty Disputes and Differences with their Neighbour, or even are surpris'd with suddain Passions and Dislikes at their proceedings; for this may sometimes be the case of the Best and most Cautious Christians, who have no security against these Temptations: but then these are ever careful to stand upon their guard, and use all means to prevent these evils taking root within their Souls; they strive to interpret every thing in the most favourable Sense, suppress all resentments, make no complaints, which being convey'd to the other Party by indiscreet and unfriendly Hands, ever serve to widen the breach; they give ear to no Whisperings

ings, ſuſpect all reports, paſs by many things both as to Words and Writing, which, if laid hold on, might help to exaggerate; are very cautious, how they anſwer Letters, chuſing to ſpeak nothing to ſuch particulars, which ſeem the dictates of a Miſtake or Paſſion, and, it may be, are follow'd with repentance, as ſoon as calm thoughts return, tho' without the power of recalling, what they then wiſh had never been writ; they engage the intereſt of Friends to remove all miſunderſtandings; ſeek often to ſpeak Face to Face and being their own Advocates, arm'd with Patience and Sincerity, undeceive the other Party in many prejudices conceiv'd; and if Truth requires it, acknowledge their own Paſſion or Miſtake; ask Pardon; and even, when blameleſs, ſubmit themſelves, eſpouſing the cauſe of Charity, and humbly ſeeking the re-eſtabliſhment of their former Peace. Thus good Chriſtians, induſtrious in uſing timely means, give not opportunity to theſe firſt Seeds of Difference to grow up to any ſtrength; but by good management, improve the very Temptations to theſe ſins, into the exerciſe of moſt Heroick Virtues, and inſtead of ſhutting, thus prudently make them

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ſerve to open the Gates of Heaven, and entail them to that Inheritance, which otherwiſe would unhappily be cut off.

And this is the misfortune here pronounc'd by the Apoſtle againſt thoſe, who take the other way; who not extinguiſhing the firſt ſparks of Jealouſies and Diſcord, admit and ſhelter them within their Breaſt, let them be blown up by others breath, till they grow into a flame, or at leaſt take ſuch hold, as to put all into diſorder. Hence laſting Quarrels and Contentions are promoted, malicious and biting Diſcourſes are carried on, every occaſion is catch'd at to thwart, provoke and undervalue each other; and ſo many evils creep in inſenſibly on Souls, that are thus diſturb'd, that 'tis no wonder the Apoſtle for theſe diſorders excludes them Heaven. And however at firſt ſight this may appear ſevere; yet if we diligently examin into the riſe and progreſs of theſe ſins, we ſhall diſcover, there's ſcarce one fundamental Virtue belonging to a Chriſtian, but what is injur'd by them, and that they quite undermine the Goſpel. For whoever but with a paſſing Eye obſerves, will find the Goſpel Spirit, to be a Spirit of Charity

rity and mutual Love, a Spirit of Humility, Meekneſs and Patience, a Spirit that teaches us to bear and forbear, to pardon Injuries, do Good for Evil, and only on theſe terms promiſes the reward of future happineſs. This is the Spirit, ſpread thro' the whole Goſpel, and there is not any one point ſo often repeated, and earneſtly preſs'd in all the Epiſtles extant in Holy Writ, as this, with the aſſurance of this being the Character of a true Diſciple, and that whoever is found without it, their Religion and all their Hopes are certainly in vain.

And are not now the ſins of Enmity and Diſſentions quite contrary to this? For in the very firſt ſtep of taking any thing amiſs of our Neighbour, is there not a want of Patience? In being diſturb'd, is there not a want of Humility? In the entertaining theſe diſquiets, is there not a want of Meekneſs? In all complaining and biting Diſcourſes, is there not a want of Charity? In engaging others in our Quarrel, is there not a want of Peace? In not ſeeking to make up the breach, is it not the effect of Stubbornneſs and Pride? In ſtanding at a diſtance, is it not Obſtinacy? In expounding every thing to the worſe

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Sense, is it not Spite and Envy? In commending their own proceedings to the disparagement of others, is it not Self-love and Revenge; with variety of other Evils? And what now is become of the Spirit of the Gospel? Here's the Spirit of Satan very plain, but nothing of Jesus Christ. And is it to be wonder'd then, that these sins are number'd amongst the works of the Flesh, which have such a complication of evils and corruption in them? The greater wonder is, that Christians should be so easie in falling into them, and letting every provocation break that Bond of Peace and Love, which cannot be violated, without, in fact, renouncing the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ. And 'tis much the greater wonder still, that this should be the misfortune of those, who by a stricter tie have oblig'd themselves to follow Christ; here, methinks, all Differences, Animosities and Dissentions should be wholly banish'd; for what can the most rigorous Austerities, and constant Devotions avail, if Charity and mutual Love attend them not? What Religion and Christianity can there be, where this indispensable Duty is left out? If they believe St. *Paul*, they must believe-

lieve, that without this, all the rest will profit nothing. Imprint therefore, O God, this fundamental Principle in the Hearts of all that undertake to be thy Servants; let no vain pretexts deceive them, to the loss of their Souls; remove Dissentions from amongst the Faithful, preserve Peace and Unity, and while they know these to be the Fruits of the Spirit, grant they may ever remember, that all Divisions are the works of the Flesh.

XV. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Gal. C. 5. V. 25. ends C. 6. V. 10.

IF *we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.* Walking by the Spirit is a necessary consequence of living by the Spirit; for the Spirit is not as a barren Seed, that can lie conceal'd, without appearing in our actions and the conduct of our lives No, there's none lives by the life of the Spirit, who leads

leads not a Spiritual life: for a Spiritual life and the Spirit of God are inseparable. *Opus suum probet unusquisq;* Let therefore every Christian prove and examin what his works are: if, upon enquiry, there appears nothing but what is Carnal and Worldly in their actions; if the Soul be not carried towards God, by Holy Desires, by Prayer, and the wings of Love, 'tis plain, there's nothing but Self-love and Passion govern in their Hearts; and they in vain flatter themselves with the thoughts of being under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, if there be not a certain bent in them, which effectually applies them to the works of Justice. They are not therefore only the profligate and wicked Christians, who live in defiance with God and his Commandments, that are here to take the Alarm; but all others, with a jealous Eye, are to apprehend themselves concern'd, who do not find, that they are govern'd by the Spirit; because whatever is not of the Spirit, is not of God; and whatever is not of God, cannot have God for a recompence; because he being infinitly Just, cannot be the reward of what is not Good; and how can any thing possibly be Good, which is not from him?

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This is the only Teſt of whatever is truly Chriſtian and Holy; and whatever will not abide this, muſt be caſt by as Corrupt and Adulterate: ſo that however the lives of many may in appearance paſs for Chriſtian, yet they are not really ſo, if they have not God for their Principle and General Mover. What then are thoſe, who have their Hearts full of the World, who being free from thoſe common Vices, which defile the great part of Mankind, have yet their Souls wholy taken up and buſied with the things of this World? on theſe is the whole run of their thoughts, theſe are the principle object of their Affections and Deſires; from the ſucceſs of theſe is the only Reſt and Satisfaction they know; and a diſappointment or miſcarriage here, is what deſtroys all inward Peace, and all in this ſeems loſt to them. Now can it be imagin'd, that theſe Earthly Souls walk by the Spirit of God, who have the World alone for their direction in all they do? Is it in God theſe live, is it him they ſeek, is it him they love, is he their Happineſs, or is the Poſſeſſion of him the end of all their labours? 'Tis this indeed God ought to be to Chriſtians; but theſe make the World a God to them

them; 'tis this, and not God, they love with all their Hearts, with all their Souls, and with all their Strength. And these are not only the unhappy circumstances of those wretched Misers, whose Happiness and Souls are lockt up in their Treasures; but, what is most wonderful, even of two many of a narrower fortune, who move with as great Solicitude within the scanty Sphere of a Room or two, as if the whole World were within their doors. They are not content to attend to every concern with care; but anxiety and a perpetual hurry accompany them in all they do; and there is not a thing they go about, tho' never so inconsiderable, but, in the worser Sense, 'tis true of them; *Anima mea in manibus meis semper:* Their whole Soul is always in their Hands; thus are they truly Worldly Souls; and tho' like Moles, their whole business is to turn up but one poor handful of Earth; yet they are as Earthly still, as if they had Mountains to remove. Hence they have no delight to converse with God in Prayer: they can find no leisure to attend to the work of their Salvation: and if at any time the importunity of Spiritual Friends or seeming decency oblige

blige them to it; with what distraction is this perform'd! How little is their care and diligence in this, if compar'd with that great Concern, with which they act in all other Affairs! Here's but a passing and unsettled Thought, and there's their Soul. For where their Treasure is, there is their Heart: a poor Treasure, God knows, to exchange for Heaven. And can these imagin, this is *walking by the Spirit*? Truly there appears to me, nothing but Corruption and the World; and tho' it be but a little part of it they adore; yet in this what are they better than those, whose Passions are more unlimited and grasp at all? The Soul is equally lost, whatever it be fixt on, if it be not fixt on God. Whether the Idol be great or little; whether it be an Ox or Ant, whether it be of Gold or Straw, the Idolatry is still the same. And if only those are born of God who overcome the World, how can these pretend to it, whose Souls are thus truly Slaves to it?

And now, if we go on by this Principle, and measure still other Christians, whose Hearts are wholy disingag'd from these kind of cares; but then whose cares are equal in studying how

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to pleaſe themſelves; who think not how the World goes, but only how to make the World a happineſs to them; in Sports and Entertainments, in vain Shews and Dreſſes, and in a life of Idleneſs and Eaſe, &c. If we meaſure, I ſay, all theſe, by this Principle of *walking by the Spirit*; have we not reaſon to apprehend, the Spirit, they walk by, is not of God, but rather the evil Spirit of Self-love and the World; ſince 'tis not God they ſeek to pleaſe; but their general care, is how to pleaſe & gratifie themſelves? And what is there of God in this, whilſt to themſelves they every one become their own Idol, and to this make a general Sacrifice of all they have or are, of Body and Soul, of all they think and do? For tho' it may be, there's nothing they are concern'd in, but what in its kind and due degree, be lawful; yet all this ceaſes to be ſo, when once it riſes to an exceſs, and with an immoderate affection carries away their Hearts from God and fixes them on Creatures. What's more innocent than a Game at Cheſs or Tables? and yet hear what S. *Francis Sales*, who is ever moderate, nor troubles his Reader with unneceſſary ſcruples, ſays on this Subject: *Above all*, Philothea, *take*

heed thou set not thy Affection on this; for how lawful soever any Recreation be, it is a Vice to set the Heart and Affection on it, to long after it, or to trouble and vex thy self with it. p. 3. c. 31. To set the Heart on what is Innocent, he says is a *Vice*: and does not he in this condemn all their lives as Vicious, who live in these excesses? Truly whoever compares them with the Gospel, must necessarily conclude it so. For a Christian there describ'd, is one that follows the life of Christ, a Man of Self-denial and Mortification, dead to the World, to its Pleasures and Vanities, Crucified with Jesus, whose Conversation is in Heaven, who esteems nothing but the love of Jesus, who seeks to please God, to this directs his Thoughts, his Desires, his Actions, and makes this the end of all his labours. This is the Spirit of the Gospel and of God; and *they, who are led by the Spirit of God, are the Children of God.* Rom. 8. 14 And whose Children then must they be, who are not directed by this Spirit? *He who is not with me,* says Christ, *is against me*: and in this declares, they are not his. Hence we may conclude, there are none, that walk by the Spirit, but such as make to-

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wards Heaven in all they do, in their Studies, in their Business, in their Diversions, in their Expences, in their Eating, Clothing and Sleeping, &c. For their design in all these, being to make use of, and proceed in each particular, as far as God has appointed it for them; all they then do, is a compliance with his Divine Will, and an effect of that Obedience and Love they owe him: But when Christians proceed by an undue method, whether in Business or Diversions; so as to set their Hearts upon them or any Creature with an immoderate affection, with the daily improvement of Self-love and the love of the World, and a forsaking of the Spirit of the Gospel, then all this is walking by the Flesh, and cannot be pleasing to him. since whatever is of Self-Love and the World, cannot be of God, but of Corruption; and they who sow in the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption, as the Apostle here says; and what is that but death? And what can possibly secure us against this evil, into which we so naturally and unthinkingly run, but thy Grace, O God: Direct us therefore we beseech thee, in all we do, that we may seek thee in all things; that nei-

neither the love of our ſelves or the World, may gain upon us, but, that as we pretend to live by the Spirit, ſo we may ever walk by the Spirit, and ſo obtain the effect of this Promiſe, That they who ſow in the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting.

XVI. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſ. C. 3 V. 13. to the end.

I *Bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,— that according to the riches of his Glory, he may grant you to be ſtrengthened by his Holy Spirit in the inward Man.* This was the great Charity of St. *Paul* to his Flock, who being truly ſenſible of the many difficulties and dangers in a Chriſtian life, and how large a portion of Grace was abſolutely neceſſary for their conduct and ſecurity, therefore made it the ſubject of his Prayers, that they might be ſtrengthen'd by God's Holy Spirit in the

the Inward Man. This is a ſufficient motive to quicken a like Spirit of Charity in all Paſtors, in regard of the Flock committed to them; not to be indifferent and unconcern'd at the State of their Souls; but with a Fatherly care to obſerve all their Spiritual wants, with laborious endeavours to ſeek to redreſs all their evils, and with fervent and daily Prayers to bend their knees before the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would vouchſafe them his Divine aſſiſtance, for their protection againſt all dangers, and bringing them to a happy end of this troubleſome Pilgrimage. A Paſtor, that thus knows how to be Solicitous for his Flock, who has them in his Heart, who eſteems them, with St. *Paul*, his Joy and his Crown, certainly inherits the Spirit of this great Apoſtle; but to be cold and negligent in their concerns, is the Spirit of a Hireling, of one that ſeems more Solicitous how to live by them, than how to make them live. Perfect, O God, this Zeal of St. *Paul* in all that undertake his charge, and make them truly ſenſible, that 'tis in their Hands, by their Watchings and Labours to make their People the ſubject of their Joy and Triumph, or

by their negligence, the subject of their Despair and Damnation at the last day.

But this Prayer of the Apostle is not a Lesson only to Pastors, but also to the Flock, to excite in them a like Zeal and Diligence for their obtaining of God that Grace, whereby they may be daily strengthen'd in the inward Man. For certainly, if they seriously consider the almost infinit difficulties and dangers that are before them, and on the other side, how altogether unable they are of themselves to overcome them, they will soon discover an absolute necessity of joyning with their Pastors, and making their constant application to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the obtaining his help, without which they must unavoidably fall a prey to the Enemy of their Salvation and be lost for ever.

Let but any one reflect on the Corruption of our Nature, and its strong inclinations to evil; on the variety of Temptations, to which we are ever expos'd; that one no sooner goes, but another comes; that while we avoid one extreme, we generally run into the other; how naturally we abuse all the Blessings and Gifts of God: What difficulties there are in conquering any ill Custom,

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in mortifying our Passions, our proper Judgment, our Will, our Imagination, our Senses; in preventing the effects of Self-love, private Intereſt and Pride in the beſt of our actions: What difficulties there are in diſcharging the obligations belonging to all States, not only of Paſtors and Magiſtrates, but of Parents, Maſters, Stewards, Truſtees, Lawyers, Traders, Children, Servants: What difficulties in breaking thro' the Vices of the Mode, and the World, which have Practice, Authority, and Numbers to recommend them, and yet are ſuch, in many particulars, as are at defiance with the whole Spirit of Chriſt and his Goſpel: What difficulties in the true uſe of Plenty, Riches and Peace: What difficulties in Sickneſs, Troubles, Poverty, in Darkneſs and drineſs of Spirit: What difficulties in the great diſproportion of our Reaſon with all the Myſteries of God; in governing our wild, roving and ſenſual Phancies; in all the acts of true Repentance, Devotion and Virtue; in not being deceiv'd with the falſe comforts of a counterfeit Mercy, a counterfeit Humility, a counterfeit Patience and Devotion, by their not being grounded and rooted in Charity, which is the

life of all Virtue: What difficulties, in fine, in dying happily, and being presented before the Judgment Seat to render an account of our Stewardship, and of all our idle Thoughts, Words and Actions. These, and infinit others are the difficulties belonging to a Christian State, ever accompanied with so many dangers from the hidden Snares of our Spiritual Enemy, from the Indiscretion, Provocation, Malice and ill Example of Neighbours, from the Corruption of our Nature and Insincerity of our Hearts, that we may say truly, we are encompass'd with evils on every side, and walk in the midst of Enemies from the first glimpse of Reason, till the last moment, when Death shuts our Eyes And then if we look into our selves, and see what grounds of security from within our selves against all these dangers, we can discover nothing, but what is sufficient to terrifie and even cast us into despair. We can see nothing but Misery and Weakness, Poverty and Blindness; so far from being able to do any thing for our security, that of our selves we are not able so much as to frame one good Thought.

And is not this consideration of our great danger on the one side, and our extreme weakness on the other, sufficient motive to make our most earnest Addresses to Almighty God, that he would please to watch over us, to strengthen us interiorly by his Holy Grace, and conduct us safe through all difficulties and dangers. We are nothing of our selves, and if he helps us not we shall ever remain in our weakness, and most certainly be overcome by our Enemies; and the consequence of this, is not only a slavery to sin here, but an everlasting slavery hereafter, from whence there can be no Redemption. One would think, this absolute dependance we have on God, would make us constant at our Prayers, and the hopes of securing us against eternal evils, would oblige us to be attentive to them. But see here a demonstration of our prodigious insensibility: 'tis not all this is sufficient to prevail on us in this point; but as to the generality, I fear, of Christians, I may say, their Devotions are perform'd with so great a distraction and coldness, that one would not imagine the subject of them to be a concern of Eternity, or that the success of it had any dependance on

God. 'Tis most prodigious, that having a Faith of everlasting life, this should make such weak impressions in us, as not only to let us be so heartily busied with this World, but likewise be so unconcern'd at our very Prayers, as to permit every trifle to take place of Eternity, and every impertinent thought to turn God out of our Hearts. What can we say of this, but only admire this our misery, and truly humble our selves at the sight of our weakness; and use our best endeavours, that, amongst all our other infirmities, this strange Stupidity at our Devotions, should make at present such a lively impression on us, as to become a Remedy of that evil which we lament, and leave in us such a lasting Sense of our misery, as to put us, not only this day, but our whole lives, upon joyning with the Apostle, in bending our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that according to the Riches of his Glory, he may grant us to be strengthn'd by his Holy Spirit in the inward Man? For 'tis thus only we can escape all the dangers before us, and secure to us the possession of life everlasting.

XVII.

XVII. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſ. C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 6.

I *Who am in Chains for our Lord, beſeech you to walk worthy of the Vocation, to which you are call'd.* This is the requeſt of St. *Paul* in Priſon, and 'tis of ſo great an extent as to comprehend all Chriſtian Duties. For to deſire us to walk worthy of our Vocation, is to deſire Chriſtians to walk in every reſpect as becomes Chriſtians, and not to forget the obligations of the State, to which they are call'd; juſt as if one ſhould recommend to Perſons of Honour, in all things to remember their degree, and never do any thing, that ſhould be unbecoming their Quality. This is an excellent general Rule for Chriſtians ever to carry with them, whereby to meaſure all their proceedings, and direct them, what to follow and what to avoid; and certainly, were it obſerv'd, tho' it might leave way for Indiſ-

Indiscretions; yet it would cut off those numberless sins, which ruin their Souls and cast so great an infamy on their Profession.

But the Apostle is not content with Generals; he descends to particulars, and shews how a Christian ought to walk worthy of his Vocation, *viz. With all Humility and Meekness; with Patience; bearing with one another in Charity; being Solicitous to preserve the Unity of Spirit in the bond of Peace.* These are the qualifications he sets down becoming the Christian State, in which none can dispense with themselves and yet walk worthy of their Profession. For a Christian is one, that undertakes to be a Follower of Christ, and to live according to the Spirit of the Gospel; now the Gospel being the Rule, and Christ the Example of all Humility and Meekness, of Patience, Charity and Peace; whoever copies these not out in his Soul, and does not practise them in his Life, cannot possibly be reckon'd a Follower of Christ and his Gospel: For if instead of Humility, he follows the suggestions of Pride; if instead of Meekness, there be Harshness and Obstinacy; if instead of Patience, there be Passion and Repining; if instead of

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Bearing and Forgiving, there be Retaliating and Revenge; if instead of Peace, there be Dissention and Quarrels; is it not plain, in all this there's a forsaking the Gospel and departing from Christ? Is it not walking in ways quite contrary to his, and practising what he condemns as unworthy of a Christian? How then can such an one sit down at peace under a Christian Name, while in his life and practice, he quite abandons, or rather makes War with him, whom he pretends to follow? For what has Pride, Obstinacy, Passion, Revenge, and Uncharitable Contentions to do with Christ? Are not all these the effects of the *old man*, which he commands his Followers to put off? And what have his Disciples to do with them, who are all commanded to be like their Master? And such as are not, walk unworthy of their Vocation.

These Virtues then here recommended by St. *Paul*, are the indispensable Duties of every Christian; but that of preserving Peace and Unity, is what he most earnestly presses & with the strongest Arguments: Because we are all but *One Body*, there is but *One Spirit*, and *One Hope* to which we are all call'd: there is but *One Lord*, *One Faith*, *One Baptism*,

Baptism, One God, and Father of all, who is over all, whose Providence extends to all, and who resides in all. Are not here powerful motives to preserve a perpetual Peace and Union amongst all that belong to Christ? 1. The Unity of his Mystical Body, of which we are Members. 2. The Unity of the Holy Spirit, who cements all together in One Body. 3. The Unity of the Divine Being, in which we ought all to be consummated for all Eternity. 4. The Unity of the Master and Head, to whom we all belong, and of the Sacrifice, by which he has Redeem'd us. 5. The Unity of Faith and Gospel, which we profess. 6. The Unity of the Sacrament, by which we are all regenerate and receive our Spiritual Being. 7. The Unity of our Creator, who has taken us out of the same nothing. 8. The Unity of a Heavenly Father, who governs us by the same Authority, fills us with his Presence, and unites us to him by his Love. Thus Almighty God having reduced all his Works to Unity, and above all, that principal one of his Church, whoever contributes to any Division, directly opposes the designs of God and the Mission of Jesus Christ. God will have peace amongst

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us, therefore there can be no doing the Will of God, where there is not a preserving of Peace. And tho' there may be sometimes pressing motives suggested for the making Contentions reasonable, yet inasmuch as these can have no proportion to that *General Good* of *Unity*, all these betray an unreasonableness in them, whilst aiming at some Particular Good, they undermine the General; and therefore however clothed with the pretext of Charity and Justice, must be ever suspected, if not condemn'd, as the effect of Passion, Self-love and Private Interest: And are certainly of that dangerous and deceitful nature, that even Learning, Sincerity and ordinary Virtue is not proof against them.

For once the Heart gives admittance to them, 'tis strange what disturbance they give to the Soul, by corrupting the Judgment, clouding the Reason, biassing the Affections; so that a Person otherwise Virtuous and most Impartial, when engag'd in any sort of Contention, ought to suspect all his own decisions; it being almost impossible for him in that disorder, to carry his Thoughts even, so as not to favour the part he espouses, and represent the adverse

adverse Cause with great disadvantages, so that we may almost generally conclude, that Injustice ever accompanies Contentions: And hence it is, that in all Differences, while each Party naturally takes upon them to be Judge in their own Cause, they proceed with so much severity against each other, and pass such Censures, as raise wonder in indifferent persons and Scandal too: Hence a little breach comes soon to be widen'd, and a ground is laid for great Animosities and Aversions, which spreading amongst the Favourers of each side, are scarce ever to be heal'd, but become irremediable evils by being propagated to Generations. This misfortune would not be so very considerable, were it confin'd to private Persons and Men of no Principles; but 'tis a Christian's surprise to see it spread so much beyond these, that even profes'd Piety and Religion is not exempt from it, not the Enclosure, not the Sanctuary nor the Altar: So that being of a nature so pernicious to Christianity, that it ought not to be found, where this is profes'd, it is notwithstanding this, found every where; as if living in Contention were not injurious to a good Conscience; and the breach of Peace were consistent

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with true Piety: Thus truly one would gueſs by the great and almoſt general Differences kept up amongſt Chriſtians, who are but too eaſie, God knows, upon very inconſidrable grounds of Opinion and Intereſt, to tranſgreſs in this fundamental point, and let private motives far out-weigh the publick: whereas it is their Duty to purchaſe Peace at any rate, and be willing to yield in many other points, for the ſecurity of this. For *if any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom*, ſays St. *Paul*, *nor the Church of God.* And St. *Gregory* was ſo true a Diſciple of his, that he declares himſelf willing *rather to ſubſcribe to anothers Judgment contrary to his own, without prejudice to Faith, than be Contentious with him.* I wiſh St. *Paul* had more Diſciples of this mind, who would not only read his Epiſtles, but be careful to obſerve them, and particularly in being Solicitous to preſerve *Unity*, and have a due regard to *Peace*, as a Fruit of the Spirit. 'Tis this ought to diſtinguiſh Chriſtians from all others, and this charge they have from Chriſt himſelf; and without this there's none can walk worthy of the Vocation to which they are call'd.

XVIII. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 1. V. 4. ends V. 8.

I *Always give thanks to God for you for the Grace of God, which has been given you in Christ Jesus.* The Blessings of God had made such a deep impression in the Heart of St. *Paul*, that he was not content with a passing and superficial Thanksgiving; but he gave thanks always; not permitting present Employments to blot out the memory of past Mercies, not even those, which God had bestow'd upon others. This was a Holy Disposition in St. *Paul*; a fruit of his perfect Charity, of his Zeal for their good, and of the great Idea he had of God's Graces; and may be easily comprehended, if we compare our selves to this Great Apostle, by considering how little we are touch'd with the Blessings of Heaven, especially those, which others receive. We, for our parts, hear a thousand instances of these,

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and as soon forget them; we have but a very imperfect Sense of them, even while they are reported: and few are Solicitous, beyond the formality of a Phrase, to render thanks for them: and if hapning to be our nearer concern, they draw from us a more hearty Thanksgiving upon the spot: yet new affairs succeeding soon stifle all these motions of gratitude; the Heart is taken up with other concerns; present objects remove the past out of sight; and we cannot with truth say with St. *Paul*, that we give God thanks always for his past Blessings, because we don't so much as think of them. In this is our great misfortune; we know only then to value God's Blessings, when we want them: and we are no sooner in possession of them, but their price presently falls, and generally is quite forgot. How valuable is Ease to us in time of Pain; Health in time of Sickness; Quiet in time of Trouble; Peace in time of Persecution; Security in time of Danger; and how much do we in these circumstances, offer for the purchase of what we desire? When God's Mercy favouring our Wishes, a short Enjoyment presently takes off from their value, we grow cold and insensible;

ble; and a long Poſſeſſion, which ſhould, in Juſtice, encreaſe our Gratitude, only ſerves us as a motive to abuſe them againſt the Giver: and by this our ungrateful Stupidity, I don't queſtion, we often oblige the Divine Goodneſs to interrupt our peaceable Enjoyments, by taking his Mercies from us, and viſiting us with Scourges, that by theſe he may awaken us and make us ſenſible of his Favours, and force us to a more Chriſtian uſe of them. So that inſtead of being Like St. *Paul*, in giving continual thanks for ſuch Bleſſings, which others receive, we ſcarce give ſhort thanks for our own; and therefore are more juſtly reſembled by the *Ten Lepers* heal'd in the Goſpel, of which number, there was only one found, that return'd with gratitude to acknowledge the mercy of his Cure: For truly I wiſh, this be not the proportion of grateful Chriſtians; for who can tell me, there's more than one in Ten, that gives thanks as they ought?

This we have but too much reaſon to apprehend, if we conſider the general abuſe of God's Bleſſings amongſt Chriſtians, and that thoſe, who enjoy the largeſt ſhare of them, inſtead of being grateful, are the Perſons who abuſe

buſe them moſt. Thus we ſee, there are none more bold Offenders, than thoſe of the ſtrongeſt conſtitution, who ſeem ſecure of Health. Thoſe, who have the advantage of Beauty or exact Proportion, have generally ſo many degrees of Vanity and Pride: Thoſe, whoſe natural Eloquence makes them admir'd, but too commonly ſhew their Art in hurtful Flatteries, ſinful Perſuaſions, in Raileries and Ridiculing of their Neighbours: And thoſe who are bleſſed with Plenty, are not they the perſons, above all others, who keep up the Credit and give authority to Vice; who waſt their Eſtates in Idleneſs, Luxury and all manner of Exceſſes? This is the common method even of the Chriſtian World; ſo that inſtead of making proportion'd returns to Heaven of what they receive, all is perverted and made the unhappy Inſtruments of ſin. Good Example and Piety is not now the conſequence of Greater Bleſſings; but where theſe moſt abound, there is Iniquity in its greateſt State. And I wiſh this were the Character of thoſe only, who, by their vicious lives, ſeem to have renounc'd all right to Heaven: for there's but too great reaſon to fear, that infinit others, who

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seem to keep within some bounds, share in this ungrateful guilt, tho' in a less offensive way. For where are the Persons, who, being any ways blessed above others, do not turn these very Blessings to the encrease of Self-love and the Love of the World; so that whilst by the particular benefits of Heaven, they are in Justice bound to approach nearer God by proportion'd steps of Love, they are too often found to depart still farther from him? 'Tis thus the moderate Christian, tho' free from Vice, yet still according to his Stock, makes his advance in the Vanity both of Cloths and Table; and those Self-denials, which under a strait fortune, he us'd to practice, now, upon favourable additions, he quite lays by; he toils no more, and under this Mechanick notion, withdraws himself from all Employment; he studies now his Ease, seeks better Company, and by degrees, Expensive Diversions become his Business; and thus employ'd, goes on unthinking, till his last sickness ending all his Sport, puts him upon being serious, to make an untoward preparation for that, which ought to have been the great concern of his Health and Life. 'Tis thus the addition of Mercies, Mercies I say, abus'd, makes

makes an Industrious, Careful and Pious Man, become a Man of Idleness and Ease, a Man of Inclination and Appetite, a Man of Sense and of this World; the more he receives from God, is only to please himself the more and not the Giver; 'tis to make him love the Creatures more, and his Creator less.

And where is now the Gratitude in this? Where is the Spirit of St *Paul*, which should be ever giving thanks, and making of every Blessing a new step to Heaven? 'Tis thus it ought to be in Christians. For is not every Good receiv'd a Gift of the Divine Bounty; is it not as so much Seed, from which most justly God expects the Fruit? And where is this Fruit, if all be abus'd and turn'd to Idleness or Sin? 'Tis plain then, all we receive from God, ought in some manner be return'd to him: *Redeant flumina unde manarunt.* All ought to appear in the Harvest, not only of grateful words, but of a more Christian life. Thus whatever the Blessings be, whether of Plenty, Peace, Good Name, Children, or any Success, these ought to be ever follow'd with the effects of a true Grateful Heart, in so many degrees of Piety and approaches made to God, in loving and serving him more

more faithfully, and a Solicitude of applying his Gifts to the end for which he gave them; to his Honour, and their own, not so much Worldly, as Eternal Good. This is St. *Paul*'s Instruction; a life of Christian Piety being the only perpetual thanks. And certainly most unhappy are they, who do not this: For since, the account we are to give, still daily encreases in proportion to the Blessings we receive, must not the day of accounts be dismal to them, who upon looking back on their whole life, find, that, instead of making returns to God for all his Mercies, in the gratitude of a holy life, they have perverted them to the love of themselves and this World, and thus abus'd them all, in making them the unhappy occasions of offending him more? Deliver us, O God, from this Ingratitude, and as thou poureſt forth thy Blessings on us, so let this one Blessing more of thy Grace ever attend them, which may effectually teach us how to use them; that we may never more pervert thy Blessings into Curses, but grow daily in Virtue, as they encrease upon us, and thus in the sweet savour of holy life, offer thee a perpetual Thanksgiving.

XIX. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſ. C 4. V. 23. ends V. 28.

Put on the New Man, which is created according to God in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth. One would think in the Search and profeſſion of Virtue there were no danger of miſcarriage, becauſe Virtue it ſelf ſeems a ſecurity againſt all Snares; and ſo certainly it is, when 'tis according to God in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth. But here's a great part of our misfortune, that when by a laborious Diligence we have diſengag'd our ſelves from all vicious habits, and now ſeem fitted to become true followers of Chriſt, we even find a way by more ſubtle Artifices, to adulterate the very Virtues themſelves, and to live at as great diſtance from God in the Profeſſion of reputed Virtues, as when engag'd in the open practice of Vice; and this is a State ſo much more dangerous than the former, as the evils of it

are more undiscernable. I say not this to terrifie sincere Souls, but to give a caution to as many as pretend to Virtue, to be sincere in what they do, and while they renounce the Carnal Enemy, to be careful not to rest contented under the conduct of the Spiritual one; but that in putting on the New Man they would be ever Solicitous, it be that New Man mention'd by the Apostle, which is created according to God in Justice and Truth.

For as there is Humility, Mercy, Piety, Patience, &c. of the New Man created according to God; so there is a false Humility, false Mercy, false Piety and Patience, which are of the old Man, not created according to God, but the evident effects of our corruption. For whenever these proceed from no other root, but of Self-love, Convenience, Interest or other Worldly and Human respects, what better Character do they deserve? And is it not thus Christians are too often miserably deluded, when being very Edifying and Exemplar in all those practices, which are the accomplishment of their Profession, and make them honour'd by as many as are Witnesses of their actions, they have no other motives, after all, of what

they do, but some Worldly considerations, which oblige them to this more than ordinary regularity? One, for example, is liberal to the Poor, and in this seeks to be esteem'd Charitable: Another, with a wonderful Humility, stoops cheerfully to mean Employments, and 'tis only to gain the Opinion of some, that by their Interest he may be prefer'd. A third bears reproachful and injurious language with admirable patience, because he dreads the uneasiness of Contention. A fourth, with great resolution stands against all Solicitation to evil, because by yielding, is apprehended the loss of Honour and of Friends. A fifth censures and avoids all the expensive extravagancy of the Age, as to Dresses, Gaming and Entertainments, because he adores his Money and cannot be Modish gratis. A sixth is ready to underatake any Charitable Office for a Friend, but is ever careful to sow on rich ground, which he knows is likely to make a good return. A seventh avoids being Criminal, apprehending the difficulty and shame of afterwards confessing the guilt. An eighth preserves Innocence, because sin disturbs his Ease. A ninth is frequent in the most Sacred Duties, but 'tis be-

cause others are so; because 'tis expected, or out of Custom, or to escape reproof. A tenth is laborious and edifying in a Religious way, but 'tis even in publick, where there's a prospect of Credit or Preferment. Thus 'tis but too often, in the practice of a Christian life, Pride, Self-love and Interest are the only support of all its reputed Sanctity. And how far is this from the New Man here recommended by the Apostle, being wholy void of Justice and Truth? There may be enough indeed to gain some Reputation with Men, who regarding only the outside of action, cannot Judge of the Interior; but this cannot deceive him, who is the Searcher of Hearts, who will separate the Gold from the Dross, and lay open all these conterfeits of Piety; *Justitiam judicabit.* For however Angelical the looks may be, he will still discover the Cloven Foot, of Self-love and Interest, that lie conceal'd and shew the virtues of these Men to have had no better support.

And what other reward can then be expected from his Just Hand, but the punishment of Vice, and such Vice, which has prostituted the most Sacred actions to their own base ends, made Her-

ven ſerve Earth, and abus'd Religion to dvance and ſanctifie their own Corrup-ion? Such Vice, by which they rob he Almighty of what belongs to him, nly to ſeek and ſet up themſelves? or certainly God being eſſentially *Al-ha* and *Omega*, the *Beginning* and *End* f all; he ought to be ſo to us in all we o. Our Humility, our Charity, our atience and whatever is good ought ver to be begun in Him, becauſe he equires theſe to be the practices of a hriſtian life, and demands them from s. They are all again to end in him, y being offer'd to the Honour of his Name, and as the accompliſhment of his Holy Will in us. This is the *Truth* nd *Juſtice* which ought to be in all our anctity; and without this, whatever anctity we profeſs, 'tis being unjuſt to God, 'tis lying to the World, and nothing better than deceiving our own Souls.

How careful then is the good Chriſtian to be, not to ſeek Temporals by Eternals; but to put on that New Man, which is created according to God, in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth, and ſincerely endeavour to give to God what in Juſtice and Truth belongs to him? And tho', having done his beſt,

he'l scarce ever so wholy gain this point, as to hinder Pride, Vanity and Self-love from creeping in even to his most Religious Duties; yet so far may he obtain'd, as ever to act upon better motives of an Eternal weight; and if these busie evils, will be importunely hovering and putting in for a share in all that's done, like the Birds about *Abraham*'s Sacrifice; upon reflection they may be renounc'd, and with the Patriarch's watchful Staff, be chased away. They are truly pernicious to all that's good, according to the place they have. For if they go before us, and we are mov'd to undertake and act with them in view; our actions cannot then be Christian, which follow such corrupt Guides: if they joyn in, as it were by accident, and go on accompanying us in what we do, they greatly lessen the value of all that's virtuously begun: but if they only follow after; then their Malice is much less, and if renounc'd, can do no prejudice by such attempts. A watchful care is therefore very necessary in this our imperfect State, where with all our diligence, 'tis difficult discerning the true motives on which we daily act. 'Tis an ill sign, when we are cold and negligent in all

such

ch Duties, where we have only God r Witness, and no Worldly respect to uth us on: and then most vigorous, hen Intereſt and Eyes of Men do give ncouragement: tho' ſometimes too, queſtion not, but Virtue makes uſe of heſe its Enemies, without much injuy: They are crooked Staves indeed, t yet in ſome degree may help us on; ce the moſt exact Rules make uſe of *ear* and *Shame* for the ſecurity of a egular and well Diſciplin'd life; and it ay be allow'd the beſt to fortifie and efend themſelves by theſe inferior moives. We are to purſue Virtue indeed pon better grounds; but, on occaſion, o take the advantage of theſe Helps annot be reprov'd; for this is only to make uſe of Earth for the gaining Heaven. Help us then, O God, in this our dangerous State; and ſince our own inſincerity is the occaſion of our having no certain aſſurance of the Motives, on which we act; grant that this uncertainty may ever keep us Humble, and in a perpetual dependance on thy Grace; and tho' I may be ignorant of my own ways, yet ſtill preſerve me in the right, that in pretending to what is commendable and virtuous, I may ever proceed according to Juſtice and Truth.

XX. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Ephes C. 5. V. 15. ends V. 21.

BE not drunk with Wine, in which is luxury; but be fill'd with the Holy Ghost. Authority and Custom have given such countenance to excessive drinking, that making a judgment from the common practice of it, even in Men of Principles and Religion, one might be inclin'd to imagine it very consistent with Christianity and Salvation: and yet turning to St. *Paul*, we see it lie under another Character; nothing less than Damnation being entail'd on it; and all those that follow it being expressly cut off from the Inheritance of Eternal Life: For neither *Thieves*, says he, *nor Covetous*, *nor Drunkards shall inherit the Kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, Again, *The works of the Flesh are manifest; Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, of which I tell you, as I have already declar'd to you, that*

they

they, who do such things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Gal. 5. 19. 20, 21. And therefore he enjoyns all the Followers of Christ, *not to keep company with any Man, that is call'd a Brother, and is a Fornicator; Covetous or a Drunkard.* 1 Cor. 5. 11. And is it not something surprising, after these Wo's pronounc'd against this Vice, to find Christians so familiar with it, that to encourage and draw Men into it, is become a Friendly part of Entertainment; 'tis nothing but an ordinary Diversion for passing spare hours, and to declare their guilt in this point, has nothing of Scandal or Defamation in it? 'Tis certain they have not a true Idea of this evil; Custom has taken off the greatest part of its horror; and tho they experience the most pernicious effects of it in themselves, yet the insensibility, which this Vice ever brings along with it, is a great impediment to its cure: and this is nothing but the Justice of its punishment: that while Men purposely drown their own Reason, they should live on, like unreasonable Creatures, smarting under the burthen of many heavy inconveniencies, without seeking just means of relief.

There's nothing but this wonderful ſtupidity, can carry Men on in this practice attended with ſuch an endleſs train of miſchiefs, whereby they are brought by degrees to neglect, if not wholly omit, all Spiritual Duties, to expoſe their Families to diſorder and ruin, to let their Creditors periſh for want, give ill example to others, ſtrengthen their own evil Paſſions, and open a way to all manner of Wickedneſs, Irreligion & Prophaneneſs; ſo that in the end, the true Deſcription of this their Chriſtian Entertainment comes to be, the drinking down the Comfort of their Wives, the Proviſion of their Children and Relations, the Bread of the Poor, the Blood of Widows and Orphans, and their own Damnation to themſelves: theſe are the true ingredients of their Cups, theſe make up the ſubject of their Mirth and Huzza's; their Glaſſes run over with Injuſtice, Cruelty and Impiety, ſo that *Balthaſſar*'s prophaning the Veſſels of the Temple, was but a poor ſhadow of theſe meetings, which confound all that is Sacred, and carry with them repeated Abominations and Deſolations. And tho' all riſe not to this exceſs, yet if we conſider the ordinary method of ſuch

such as are more moderate, and see, what a general mis-spending there is of their Time and Money, how unprofitably they live, how they dull their Spirits, indispose themselves for Prayer, omit the Duties of their Family, expose themselves to variety of sinful Discourses, and by degrees waft their Estates, we may easily discover, even in these, a sort of malignity, which, like a Canker, gnaws out the very Bowels of the Gospel. For while this is calling aloud upon Christians to Watch and Pray, to deny themselves, to take up their Cross, to crucifie the Flesh with all its Lusts, to die to the World, to put on the New Man, to bring forth worthy fruits of Penance, to redeem the time, to give what is superfluous to the Poor, to be ever prepar'd for the last hour; their common practice is so contrary to this in every point, that instead of following, as they are Commanded, they rather seem to evacuate all the Maxims of Christ and his Apostles.

And yet these are the Christians of our times, these are the Men, who are encompass'd, above others, with the Blessings of Plenty and the dew of Heaven: this is the grateful return they make for all they have receiv'd; thus they

practice

practice Self-denials, and prepare for Eternity; living a reproach to their Religion, a scandal to Christianity; and what a presumptuous expectation of a miraculous Grace must they look for, if they think of dying better than they have liv'd? And were this the case only of some few, it were not so much to be lamented; but to reflect, that this evil is spread on all sides; that 'tis so common, that a Sober Man must either live buried at home, without Conversation; or run the hazard of this Shipwrack, if he ventures abroad; that they are not contented with their own misfortune, but are ever soliciting and importuning, till they have communicated their evil, and made their Friends as vicious as themselves; this is a thing deserves the Prayers and Tears of all good Christians, and ought to excite in those Gentlemen, who live in the Circumstances, a Zeal of reclaiming their Countrey from the infamy of this Brutish excess. Those who are truly sensible of their own repeated Transgressions, and the ill example they have given in this point, can no ways make a juster recompence of their past Extravagancies, than by now countenancing Moderation and Sobriety, and so

so far by their example encouraging it, as forthwith to quit all those, who promote the practice of their wonted Excesses; that as far as formerly they have contributed to the propagation of this Vice, they may now labour for its reformation. And would not those Worthy Persons do service to themselves and their Neighbours, who being not yet infected with this evil, would resolutely stand to their Principles of Sobriety, and never permit themselves to be overcome by the unreasonable importunity of Friends? A courage in this particular, would be gallant and very becoming the Professors of the Gospel: and tho' it might be expos'd for the present, to the reproaches of some wet jests, yet all these would soon be wip'd off; and those very Persons would commend, when Sober, what over their Cups they have rail'd at as unsociable and ridiculous. 'Tis but once or twice with resolution declaring their minds and stoutly standing to it, and they are for ever secure; when yielding but once puts them ever in danger, by discovering that weakness, that they may be overcome: and who does not see, 'tis much easier standing their ground at first, than to retire,

when

when once drawn in? 'Tis by a weak compliance many have been irrecoverably loſt, by engaging in an evil, they have at firſt deteſted; and the thoughts of withdrawing at a ſeaſonable time, have only ſerv'd to enſnare them into the extremity of miſchief, and put them upon being Promoters of what they began with diſlike. This therefore is not the way: No, it muſt be a certain ſteddines of mind, immovable in all attempts, muſt here be expected to gain the point; and, I queſtion not, were there an Aſſociation of ſome reſolute Souls, to undertake the cauſe of Sobriety, they would ſoon find encouragement in their Succeſs. By this way, all Sober Converſation would be countenanc'd, Gentlemen of moderate temper might live with ſome Credit in the Countrey, and not be oblig'd to abandon their Houſes, for fear of ill Company; more Honourable Diverſions might be encourag'd, and no neceſſity of becoming Sots, to make themſelves fit Company for Neighbours and Gentlemen; Religion and Morality might by degrees be promoted, and ſome Diſpoſitions laid for being filled with the Holy Ghoſt: For truly till this Vice be reform'd, there can be no habitation

habitation for this Divine Guest. Do thou then, O Powerful Mover, inspire some Christian Breasts with these generous Thoughts of standing against the Torrent, that so Christianity, which could never be worsted by Persecution, may not now shamefully be drunk out of doors.

XXI. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Ephes. C. 6. V. 10. ends V. 17.

PUT *on the Armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the Snares of the Devil.* A Christian's life is a Combat, not to end but with death; a Combat not only with Flesh and Blood, but with Devils, whose nature is Spiritual, whose number is prodigious, whose Power is terrible, whose Kingdom is of a great extent, whose Artifices are subtle, whose Malice is consummate, who make their attempts at all times, in all places, and in all man-

manners; so that no Retirement or Walls, which shut out the World, can be a security against their Snares. There's no shelter but in God alone; and yet so, that even they, who fly under the shadow of his Wings, shall not be priviledg'd from variety of assaults; but however putting on his Armour, is the only means of being Victorious over these infernal Enemies. Such Christians therefore as neglect their Duties to God, pray but seldom, and even then give up their minds to all distracting trifles that occur, must not wonder, if they often experience the Devil's malice in sinful suggestions, and their own weakness in yielding to them: for tho' God has promis'd to help those, who are in distress, yet 'tis promis'd to such only as call upon him; tho' there's an assurance given, that he will not permit us to be tempted above our strength; yet this regards those only, who are faithful in his Service, and with earnestness solicit Heaven for assistance, whereby they may be prepar'd against all attempts. If then there be a neglect of God, a life careless and torpid, bent on ease and pleasure, and little sensible of their own infirmity, and the necessary dependance they have on

the Divine Succors, what wonder, if such become a prey to the Enemy and are made a part of his Triumphs? It must be imputed to their own negligence that they meet with Trials above their strength, and are so often overcome, since they seek not to put on the Armor of God, which is their only defence.

There must be a lively Faith too, which is to serve them as a Buckler; a Faith of those Eternal Goods of the next life. The expectation of these, is to raise their Hearts to a contempt of all the passing Flatteries of Concupiscence, and support them under the weight of Evils. He that firmly believes an everlasting Happiness to come, will be ever willing to suffer something for it: He'll cheerfully abandon what delights here; and think it no ill exchange, when he reflects, that the Eternal Possession of God is to be the recompence of such Self-denials. We daily see what wonderful effects the prospect of Worldly Interest or Rest produces; with what Patience Men go thro' great hardships, how easily they deny themselves even their most favourit pleasures, and stand untir'd against repeated injuries and provocations, when they

they have but some Temporal advantage in their Eye The same are the effects of a vigorous and active Faith; the Glory of the Blessed so much eclipses all the greatness of whatever is valuable or delightful here below, that the privation of it seems not considerable; and ordinary Sufferings and Self-denials are a very easie purchase of so lasting a Blessing. Thus Faith serves for a Buckler, and covering the Soul, defends it against all the Devil makes use of here that is either charming or terrifying.

But the Word of God is to be the Sword or offensive Weapon, by which the Enemy is to be put to flight. Christ in three assaults repuls'd the Devil with three passages of Holy Writ, for our example; This is the Sacred expedient, by which God establishes his Kingdom in our Souls, and overthrows the Devil's. Happy then is that Soul, that in time of Temptation stands thus Arm'd, and when the Enemy makes his attempts, can meet him thus provided: *My help is from our Lord. Let my God arise and my Enemies be put to flight. O God, incline unto my aid; O Lord, make hast to help me. Thou art my Helper in tribulation; protect me under the shadow of thy wings. Our Lord is my light and*

my

my Salvation, whom shall I fear? Our Lord is the Protector of my life, who shall make me tremble? If whole Armies stand against me, my Heart shall not fear. How long, O Lord, do'st thou forget me? How long shall the Enemy be exalted against me? Have regard to me and hear me, my God, enlighten my Eyes, that I sleep not in death, that my Enemy may never say, I have prevail'd against him. Arise, to my help, O Lord, and say to my Soul, I am thy Salvation, &c.

Thus the Christian is to secure himself, by putting on the Armour of God; and if he be ever thus prepar'd, let him not fear: for if the Devil's malice seems endless and untir'd, his Courage is to be so too; and what then can hurt him? He is not to be discourag'd on this score, but persevere to the end in hopes of a Crown. Dejection of Spirit and the anxiety of a disquieted Mind, is not the left Temptation, and therefore as stoutly to be resisted as any other of a fouler aspect. Whom the Devil cannot overcome by force, he endeavours to tire out by importunity: If he cannot prevail, for the breaking the Commandments, he's content to disturb the keeping them. But the Providence of God has a design of Mercy in

in the permission of this lasting War: He knows, that frequent Trials are the exercise of Virtue, that the Mind is awaken'd and render'd more active by opposition, that by dangers 'tis made sensible of its own weakness and total dependance it has on God, is kept in a perpetual state of Humility, and push'd on to seek help from above. Were it not for this necessity of Divine Succors, it would fall, by the weight of corrupt Nature, into the most dangerous of all temptations, that is, of performing all the actions of Piety without any interior feeling, with tepidity and indifferency: this is but too often the ill effect of Peace; Christians like Sea-men, being too apt to sleep in a Calm, when a Storm makes them watchful and laborious.

Let not then the Pious Soul be discourag'd under the severest Trials; God has so ordered it for his eternal good; 'tis his Duty to go on under the appointments of Heaven: His care indeed ought to be, to avoid all occasions, and never voluntarily expose himself to danger: in this case he has reason to fear, that God may leave him to himself, in punishment of his rashness or his neglect; for tho' Christ stretch'd

forth

his Hand to *Peter* walking on the water, in reward of his Zeal and his Faith; yet Negligence or Preſumption can never expect this priviledge of the Divine Aſſiſtance, when by theſe Men are blindly carried on to walk upon Precipices. But, in all other caſes, let Courage and a Confidence in God keep up the Chriſtian's Heart: Chriſt himſelf was tempted for our Inſtruction, and to inform us, that no degree of Holineſs is ſecure: The Bleſſed in Heaven have paſs'd thro' great Temptations, and by theſe their Fidelity has been tried like Gold in the fire. If thou art tried too, remember to be Faithful, put on the Armour of God and ſtand it out; run to Chriſt, like the Apoſtles in the Storm; and if he ſeems not to hear, 'tis only to add ſtill greater fervour to thy Prayers. *Si moram fecerit, expecta illum, quia veniens veniet & non tardabit.* Call on him, and deſpair not; for none ſhall be confounded, that put their truſt in him. 'Tis an uneaſie life to a Soul that ſeeks God, to be diſturb'd with endleſs Temptations: but 'tis an uneaſineſs more to Self-love, which deſires quiet, than to the Love of God, which is content in being exercis'd. 'Tis the next, and not this, is the life

of

of Rest: Here thou art to fight and overcome, that thou may'st be Crown'd hereafter. Fight then on, that at the last hour, thou may'st have the comfort of saying with St. *Paul*, *Bonum certamen certavi*, I have fought a good fight, and there is laid up for me a Crown of Justice.

XXII. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Philip, C. 1. V. 6. ends V. 11.

THis I pray for, that your Charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding, that you may approve the better things. Those Christians, who apprehend how great difficulty there is in approving and chusing what is best, and to how many miscarriages such a Choice is expos'd, easily understand the Apostle's Zeal for the *Philippians*, in making this Prayer for them, That their Charity may still encrease in all knowledge for the discerning

ing that which is best. For truly if Almighty God gives not a blessing for the encrease of Knowledge rooted in Charity, 'twill be very easie mistaking in the choice of what is good. If the Heart of Man, instead of being animated with Charity, be corrupted with Passion, the light of Reason, Justice and Truth is not sufficient to direct it, for Passion so obscures, if not wholy darkens, this light, that it violently pushes on the Soul to make use of all its natural abilities, to the perverting or invalidating the strongest and most evident Motives to all good: It causes a certain blindness in the Heart, so much more unfortunate than that of the Body, that it makes a Man in love with his darkness, and desire to abide in it; it makes him hate the light and be afraid of seeing it; sets him against all the Charitable offers of Direction, so as with insolence to oppose those, who would hinder him from those Precipices, which are before him; and has those very Symptoms of Madness, as to think all those blind, who are not like himself.

The prodigious effects of this we see in the Pharisees, upon whom thus prepossess'd, all the evidence of Christ's Miracles

cles work'd nothing to the opening their Eyes; but only put them upon making wrong constructions of every thing he did, and finding out expedients to defend themselves and others against the force of his light; and being thus rashly carried on by Passion, instead of being mov'd by Charity, they were so far from chusing what was best, that they ran head-long into an Abyss of Error and Wickedness.

This is what ought to be a terror to all Christians; and yet there are still other degrees of it, tho' much inferior to this, with great solicitude to be avoided by them. For 'tis not only the malicious Passion of the *Jews* is an obstruction in the choice of Good; but every degree of it, every affection of the Mind, that is not rooted in Charity, is generally attended with the same ill consequence, and ought to make Christians very apprehensive in the choice they make: lest being influenc'd by some disorder of the Heart, they be led out of the way to something that is unjust or unreasonable. *Education* and *Custom* it self is enough to cause this darkness, and indispose the Soul for the discerning what is right and just: but, as for *Interest*, *Favour*, *Dislike*, *Ambition*,

Ambition, Covetouſneſs, Fear, Self-love, &c. the ill effects of theſe are wonderful in this kind, and 'tis ſtrange to conſider, what a thick Cloud theſe caſt upon Reaſon, and totally hinder it in the approbation and choice of what is right: ſo that if a Chriſtian be not mindful, in joyning with St. *Paul,* to Petition of God a *large encreaſe of Charity, in Knowledge and all Underſtanding* he is in evident danger of being miſled by theſe falſe lights, to the choice of what is contrary to his greateſt Intereſt, and is rather the effect of ſome Paſſion, than his Reaſon.

Hence the ordinary method of Chriſtians is much to be lamented, who in the choice of what is moſt important to them, are ſo little concern'd in taking God's help along with them, but generally put themſelves under the conduct of ſome Paſſion for their direction; and ſo, for the diſcerning more clearly in the choice they make, moſt abſurdly begin, in chuſing darkneſs rather than light. 'Tis thus in that choice, which is made for life; when a Married State is reſolv'd on, and ſo much depends on the choice of the Perſon, that not only the Temporal but Eternal Comfort is evidently

hazarded, if this be ill made; one would think, none would ever venture on this, without having first earnestly solicited Heaven for its assistance, and direction in this case: and yet how contrary is the practice; when many times, there's nothing more than the violence of a suddain Passion, rais'd from some external agreeableness, which determines the point, without any knowledge of more solid qualifications, necessary for discharging the Duties of that State? And if more time be taken by others to deliberate the case, 'tis seldom with the knowledge of Charity, which is alone capable of directing for the best; but generally most sordid and vain Principles have the powerful influence, and preside in the choice. The enquiry is about Money, Dignity and Place; if these answer expectation, the business goes on; and as for the Christian dowry of Piety, Moderation, Virtue, Patience and Peace, this is either dispens'd with, or a very general account serves the turn: So that if the Temporal circumstances do but satisfie, the Eternal are put to the venture. And 'tis most unaccountable, into what perplexing inconveniencies many cast themselves by this rashness; on the pro-

prospect of some inviting bait, either of Money or Honour, sacrificing all their Rest, Comfort, and Conscience, by tying themselves to such Persons, whose known Irregularity, Prodigality and Vice cuts off all hopes of those more desirable Goods. But how can it be otherwise, when in an Affair of this consequence, they have no other guidance, but of some brutish and vain Passion; they first blind themselves, and then go on in a way, where none can go safely, but who have God to direct them? And this, I question not, is the true ground of so many unhappy Marriages, of such disorders in Families, of Children neglected, or barbarously Educated and of Estates wasted.

The same ill method is too much practis'd by Parents in disposing of their Children, and by Children in regard of the state of life which they chuse. The only thing consider'd is *Profit* and *Honour*; where there appears the most promising hopes of these, there's no need of farther consideration, the business is concluded; tho' the Principal Point is yet unthought on, which is, how far each state is proper for them in a Christian way, and most consistent with their Salvation? But this is gene-

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many running into them, but this f
damental neglect of not chuſing acc
ding to the knowledge of Charity. T
ſame 'tis in chuſing of Maſters and Se
vices, and almoſt every thing we
ſolve on: 'Tis Humour, Paſſion, In
reſt, Self-love, &c. determine
cho

choice, and, I fear, command too much in all we do. And, O God, to how many miscarriages, both Eternal and Temporal, are we expos'd, by putting our selves under the conduct of such blind Guides, and neglecting thee, by whose Blessing alone we are to succeed in all we undertake? Help us in this our misery, in making us more solicitous for our everlasting happiness; and let our Charity so abound more and more in all Knowledge, that in whatever we determine, we may above all things have our principal regard to Thee, and so ever be in a way of approving what is best.

XXIII. *Sunday after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE.

Philip. C. 3. V. 17. ends C. 4. V. 3.

BE *Followers of me.* The advice is short, but such as speaks at length the excellencies of this great Apostle, whose life was such an exact Copy of the Gospel, that requiring the *Philippians* to follow him, was a full exhortation to them of following the Gospel. To follow him, was to love Jesus above all things, to know nothing but Jesus and him Crucified; to esteem all things besides Jesus, as nothing; to desire to forsake all things and suffer all things for the love of Jesus; to desire to be with Jesus, to sigh and long to be united to him: to be willing to undertake all hardships, to expose himself to Persecution, Torments and Death for his Neighbour's good; to rejoyce in Tribulation; to be Crucified and dead to the World, to embrace

embrace its Troubles, and renounce its Pleasures; In fine, to be Followers of *S. Paul*, was to be Followers of Jesus and his true Disciples. Good advice to the *Philippians* in a few words, and happy they, if they were solicitous to follow it. But is it not an exhortation too, or rather a command, to all Pastors, to be so exact in all the Discipline of their lives, that without danger to their Flock, they may every one say to those under their charge; *Be Followers of me?* As many as succeed St. *Paul* in his Function, ought so to inherit his Virtues, as to give the same instruction, without confusion to themselves or danger to their People. But except they live with him, they cannot Preach with him.

To say Prayers to the Flock every Pastor undertakes, because here an external Decency and Gravity is generally sufficient to recommend them to the People; and if they are interiorly indispos'd for this Duty, 'tis only known to God, without offence to the Hearers: therefore this part of the Function all readily perform. Some go farther and undertake to Preach and Instruct others to Salvation, and think they have discharg'd this part very well, if they

have deliver'd found Doctrine, with Zeal to the People: but how very few are they, who with a just assurance can Preach this Sermon of the Apostle: *Estote mei imitatores*: *Be Followers of me*; without which all other eloquence, however florid, must needs be barren, since no words can have that weight with the Flock, which are not accompanied with good example; neither can God be expected to give a Blessing to such Instruction, which is only the Eloquence of the Tongue and not of the Heart?

But whatever the Pastor be, whether Eloquent or Silent, he is still a Preacher; his life speaks aloud to all that know his Conversation; *Imitatores mei estote*. *Be followers of me*. Whatever his practice be, 'tis as remarkable as a Voice from a Pulpit, and is an encouraging Lesson to the Flock, of Virtue, if Good, and of Liberty, if that be his practice. He who lives with *St. Paul*, daily Preaches with *St. Paul* the Doctrine of the Cross, the Love of Christ Crucified and renouncing the World: and he who lives to himself and the World, daily Preaches up Self-love and the World; and both one day shall accordingly find the just recom-

recompence of their fruitful Example, in the number of Souls that either live or perish by these their powerful Instructions. A happy day 'twill be to those, whose lives have been a propagation of the Gospel; but how dreadful to such, who being Enemies of the Cross of Christ, have encourag'd Ambition, Covetousness, Luxury, Excess; who have invited to the broad way, by a life of Idleness and Ease, by gratifying themselves in all the liberties of Sense and Self-love, to the evacuating all those Maxims of Labour, Watching and Self-denial, recommended in the Gospel, as necessary for the support of Virtue in this our State of Corruption? These will then find in numbers of lost Souls, the powerful Preaching of their lives, and that all their liberties have spread to Generations.

But this Exhortation of St. *Paul* concerns not only Pastors, but Parents too: these are ordain'd by Almighty God, to give due Education to their Children, bring them up in the fear of God, and provide them all instruction necessary for a Christian life; and besides this, to give them such good example, that by the Parents Virtues and Discipline, the Children may insensibly be led into the

the way of God's Commandments, and be able to say with *David*; *Hæreditate acquisivi testimonia tua Domine*: *Thy Laws, O Lord, have come to us by Inheritance.* And this will certainly be so, if they be the Christians they ought to be: for the life of Parents to Children, is like that of the Pastor to his Flock; it is a daily Sermon, which says to them, *Be followers of me*: for Children have it engrafted in their nature, to approve and follow what they see in their Parents. Hence we may pronounce those happy, whose lives are so well order'd, as to be a constant Exhortation to their Children, to Piety and the Love of God, to Moderation, Meekness, Patience, Charity, Compassion, &c. to a detestation of all Injustice, Luxury and other modish Vices of the Age. Such as these answer the Trust they have undertaken, and are faithful to their Charge: And nothing but this can secure them against Confusion and Despair, in whatever miscarriages afterwards befall their Children: for tho' these must ever be very severe afflictions to Parents; yet the consideration, of nothing having been occasion'd thro' their faults and example, is the only thing that can possibly temper and ren-

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der them any ways tolerable; and is therefore a point, in which Parents, as often as they prepare for the Sacraments, ought strictly to examin themselves; so to lay the foundation of a future Peace, and secure them hereafter against all Fears, which otherwise may be a Rack on their Souls.

For certainly it must be so to those, who unmindful of this Duty, and carried away with the violence of their own Passions, give their Children daily instructions and encouragements to Vice, in letting them be Witnesses of their Idleness, Luxury and Intemperance; of their Cursing and Swearing; of their Prophane, Passionate, and Uncharitable Discourses, and of variety of other Disorders and Irregularities, by which they train them up by degrees to wickedness, make their Houses so many Schools of the Devil, and settle their Children in the inheritance of their Vices, long before they come to their Estates. Now what a part is this for Parents to act, who, as they have brought their Children forth to this World, are under the strictest obligation, of helping them forwards, as far as in them lies, towards the possession of a better; and, instead of this, to lead

lead them into evil, to encourage them in wickedness, to teach them to provoke God betimes, and thus become the unhappy Instruments of their Damnation. ---- What shall I say? I think 'tis the most unnatural Cruelty in the World, a barbarity so inhuman, that to Parents, who have but Soul's to think, there cannot possibly be any thing more tormenting. To see how fond and tender they are of their Children, how very sensible of every thing that hurts them, and yet at the same time time to be insensibly preparing them for Eternal Flames, is a Christian absurdity, such as must necessarily upon reflection, put them on the Rack, and scarce admits of any consideration to moderate the pain: The Children of their Bowels, and by their own hands led to the brink of Hell. And what a despairing guilt must it bring on their own Heads, if they do not reclaim them: for if so severe a Sentence be pronounc'd against those whoever they be, that scandalize any of these little ones, *Mat.* 18. 6. how must those Woes be multiply'd on Parents when 'tis they that give the Scandal? Let those understand the weight of them that can

I heartily wish Parents and Pastors would seriously consider this point, and be so far prevail'd on by the greatness of their obligation, and these dismal consequences of their transgressions, as to be faithful to their Trust, to edifie by their good example all under their care; and not allow, in themselves or others, any thing that may give scandal to their little ones, and draw on them the guilt of Parricides or Murtherers of Souls, and even those Souls, which they undertake to save. But this must be the effect of thy Grace, O God: help therefore, I beseech thee, all those infinit numbers, who have this great charge upon them: make them sensible of their Duty; preserve them from all Scandals; establish them in the practice of Virtue and good Discipline, that they may be as Lights shining to those that follow; that their lives may be an encouragement to all good; and the Virtues of their Children and Flock may thus come to be the everlasting encrease of their Crowns.

XXIV. *Sunday after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Coloſ. C. 1. V. 9. ends V. 14.

WE *pray without ceaſing*---*that you may walk worthy of God, pleaſing him in all things*, and *bringing forth fruit in every good work.* The obligation we are under of pleaſing God, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, may be eaſily apprehended by the great Solicitude of St. *Paul*, in praying without ceaſing, that his Flock might ſtrictly follow this rule and be ever found thus doing. The ground of this our common Duty is evident; firſt, on the part of God; becauſe he being our Sovereign Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, Preſerver, Father, the Beginning and End of all things, Juſtice obliges us, who are his Creatures, the price of his blood, his Servants, his Children, and wholy depending

pend'ng on his Will, ever to walk worthy of him, and please him in all things, in every good work. Secondly, from the consideration of our selves, and the circumstances of our State: For since we believe a life eternal to come, and that the obtaining Possession of it depends on the good management of this present life, in discharging all those Duties Almighty God exacts from us, 'tis a Justice we owe our selves, to be careful in pleasing God, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, that so we may not be excluded that everlasting Inheritance, the Divine Mercy has prepar'd for us. Upon these heads, we are oblig'd to be bringing forth fruit; and hence appears the necessity of a Christian life being a fruitful life; that is, of the Christian being so employ'd, that what he does, may be pleasing to God, and consequently beneficial in order to Eternal Happiness; because this is to be the fruit of his living here; and this is the truest measure of a Christian life: and therefore St. *Bernard* says, *Whatever a Man does, that is not for this end of pleasing God, it is being idle and doing nothing; 'tis living without fruit, and losing that time, which is given us.*

Hence,

Hence, first, Whatever time is spent in doing what is contrary to the Commands of God or his Church, in Detraction, evil Conversation, Excesses, Revenge, Injustice, &c. is doing worse than nothing, is time quite lost. Secondly, An idle life, whether exterior or interior, as of those who apply their Thoughts to nothing, or at least unprofitably, in vain projects, chimerical designs, are at rest with their Arms across, is doing nothing and time lost. Thirdly, All indifferent actions, as Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, Visiting, Recreating, &c. if done, only to please our selves, or on human considerations, without any referring them to God, is doing nothing and time lost. Fourthly, Doing what is otherwise good, if it be not what God requires of us, as for a Magistrate to be visiting the Sick, when he should be administring Justice to the Oppress'd; a Pastor to be Studying, when the necessities of his Flock call for help; a Shop-keeper or Servant to be all day in the Church, when the obligation to his Family or Master, requires his being at home, with all of this kind, is doing nothing and time lost. Lastly, Doing the best of actions without regard to God and our Salva-

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tion, is doing nothing and time loſt: becauſe all this is either contrary to the Will of God, or elſe not done, as he requires it; and conſequently, 'tis not walking worthy of God, 'tis not pleaſing to him; and therefore, not poſſible to bring forth fruit. And what a miſfortune muſt it be to Chriſtians, thus to loſe this time, who have only this time granted them for working out their Salvation, which being once wholy loſt, muſt with everlaſting deſpair be lamented, but can never be redeem'd!

And now ſince this is the condition of our being here, that we muſt either bring forth the fruit requir'd, or elſe never be Happy, I know nothing ſo much to be dreaded by Chriſtians, and with greater care to be avoided, than an idle and unactive life, which tho' not Criminal in terms, is yet ſuch, as in it ſelf, or its conſeqnences at leaſt, renders Salvation difficult, if not wholy inconſiſtent with it; for if bringing forth fruit be neceſſary, 'tis not only the Land that is overgrown with Thorns, is accurs'd; but even that which lies unprofitable and barren without Thorns or Fruit: Therefore was a Curſe pronounc'd againſt the Tree in the Goſpel

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found without Fruit; and the Servant who had not misspent his Talent, but only laid it by without any improvement, was rejected, not for a wicked, but an unprofitable Servant. The Christian's Duty is not only to avoid evil, but to do good; 'tis to bring forth fruit; if he does not this, he needs not ask what Commandment he breaks? For tho' he be no Thief, nor Murtherer nor Adulterer, yet he's an *Unprofitable Servant*, and their portion is much the same.

Must it not therefore be a great Unhappiness in those, who ought ever to be well employ'd, not to know how to employ themselves at all? Truly I cannot but pity that great number of both Sexes, who have inclinations to do well, but are every day at a loss and know not what to do: their time, which ought to be so precious, sticks on their hands, and all their consideration is, how they are to spend it idly? 'Tis their great misfortune, and so, I fear, they'll find it; but 'tis a much greater in their Parents, who have given them such wretched and unchristian Education, as to make them in love with nothing, that ought to be their fit employment of vacant hours: there

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are great variety of theſe; whether in Studying, Reading, Working, which are honourable enough and ſuitable to all degrees; and tho' not neceſſary for a livelihood, becauſe they are otherwiſe bleſs'd with plenty, yet neceſſary ſtill to make them live like Chriſtians; and ſuch, to which the Parents care ought inſenſibly to incline them in their tender years. But theſe, too often indiſcreetly fond, ſtudy more to court and pleaſe their Children, than to breed them up like Chriſtians: the Childrens inclinations govern their Parents more than their own Reaſon, Religion or Duty; hence their chief care is how to ſatisfie them; by this means to ſecure to themſelves their love: for this reaſon, they encourage them in all that is Modiſh, Vain and Curious, and by this yielding Method, daily ſtrengthen in them thoſe natural Infirmities and Corruptions, which they bring into the World; and for fear of making them uneaſie, dare not reſtrain their inclinations, nor apply them to ſuch things, which afterwards may be an advantage in the well ſpending of their time. Thus principled they grow up, and tho' their own reaſon then weakly informs them, they ought to be well employ'd; yet finding

finding nothing they can then turn to with any delight, they are put to consider how to divert themselves: and hence each Sex unhappily takes its course wholy to Diversion and Idleness; and thus their life is spent, in unprofitable Visits, in the Theatre, the Park, the Musick-House, in Entertainments, in Taverns, Gaming, Balls, *&c.* And how many beginning in these Schools, go on so far, till they have an aversion to every thing that's orderly and good, and by degrees arrive to profess'd Impiety, Intemperance and Vice; wasting their Estates and Health, and abandoning Religion and all the concern of a future State? Truly, of so many Souls that perish, of so many Families that are brought to ruin, of so many that take extravagant and unchristian ways, I cannot but apprehend, the greater number owe their misfortunes to this unhappy root of Idleness, and the mischievous neglect of Parents, in not teaching their Children to love some better employment of their time, and exposing them to that desperate Temptation all their lives, of not knowing what to do: desperate I say, for tho' perseverance in the continued labours of a virtuous life, be to all difficult, and has variety of din-

dangers to overcome; yet to ſuch as are at a loſs in knowing not how to employ their time, theſe difficulties and dangers are multiplied to ſo great an exceſs, that it muſt be no leſs than a Miracle to preſerve ſuch in any tolerable degree of Chriſtianity, and ſecure them from the depth of Vice; and this is the Bleſſing fond Parents too often leave their Children, flattering them in petty things, and making them for ever miſerable; ſo that in the end it will appear they had better have bred them to the labours of the Plow, than brought them up to this State of Idleneſs; whilſt their Salvation depending on their walking worthy of God, pleaſing him in all things and bringing forth fruit in every good work, they are by this means taught to walk only worthy of a wicked World and unworthy of God, to pleaſe their own corrupt Paſſions and diſpleaſe him, and bring forth no other fruit but of Vice and Damnation. And yet, O God, how common is this practice in the World! 'Tis thy powerful Grace alone can remedy it, in making Parents wiſer, and Children more careful of their time, and laborious in every Duty. Remedy it therefore, I beſeech Thee.

I. *Sunday of* Advent.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 13. V. 11. ends V. 14.

'*TIs now time for us to arise from sleep---- let us therefore cast away the works of darkness and put on the Armour of light.* With this day we begin *Advent*, a time appointed by the Church to prepare for the great Solemnity of *Christmas* now approaching, when with Adoration and Gratitude we are to celebrate that ineffable Mystery of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made Man, being born of the Virgin *Mary* for our Redemption: to prepare, I say, for this great Solemnity, these four Weeks of *Advent* are appointed us by the Church; and for this end it is She, on this day calls out to us, in the words of St. *Paul*, '*Tis now time to arise from sleep, Cast away the works of darkness*: Now when the Son of God is approaching, now when we

we are to prepare to meet him, no more ſleep of Tepidity & Sloth; no more ſleep of Gluttony, Luxury and Intemperance; no more ſleep of Contention, Animoſities and Envy. No, we are to Sanctifie our ſelves, as the *Jews* were commanded to do, when God had promiſed to come down in ſight of the People; and ſo endeavour to receive him with interior diſpoſitions ſuitable to the greatneſs of the Myſtery: without this, we can expect very little effect of this Mercy, but have reaſon to fear, thro' our unworthineſs we ſhall be wholy excluded, with that unhappy Man, who came to the Marriage-Feaſt without the Wedding Garment.

We are then this day to riſe from the ſleep of Sloth and Tepidity: for when the Son of God compaſſionating our miſery, deſcends upon Earth, cloth'd with our Humanity, and ſubjects himſelf not only to the common hardſhips of this Mortal State, but chuſes even that bitter portion of it, in Poverty, Contempt, Perſecution, Reproaches, to which Nature is ſo much averſe, and concludes all in the unſpeakable Torments of a cruel and ignominious Death; when the Son of God,

God, I say, for the love of us and our Salvation, comes thus into the midst of us, is it not time for us to rise from the sleep of Sloth? Or can we imagin, we have either Reason or Faith, if this infinit Charity of our Redeemer be not enough to awaken us? Captives who have pass'd many years tir'd under the weight of Oppression and Chains, and now lost all hopes of Liberty; upon the news of an unexpected Deliverer approaching, who at his own charges, and taking upon him their Slavery, designs their Ransom, must certainly receive new life, and raising up their dull Spirits, in transports of joy, expres their respect and gratitude to their Redeemer: here all dejection would be insensibility, and heavy sleepiness Ingratitude. 'Tis our very case; and therefore for us to lie still now, when we have the Encouragement of such a laborious Charity before us; to go on slothful, and sleepy, and with little or no concern of shaking off our Chains, when our Redeemer comes, who, not on free cost, but with the price of his blood purchases our Ransom, seems not a sin of sleepiness, but of affected stupidity, and is an Ingratitude, I fear, unpardonable. Tis therefore now time for us to rise from sleep.

But

But have we not ſtill greater reaſon to caſt of the works of darkneſs in renouncing all Gluttony, Luxury and Intemperance? For what part can they expect in the Mercies of a Redeemer, that comes to die for the overcoming of Sin, who in their lives go on maintaining the intereſt of Sin? This is to eſpouſe a Cauſe contrary to Chriſt, and ſtand in oppoſition to him; and therefore it can be no leſs than mocking God, and miſerably impoſing on our own Souls, to pretend to his Mercies, while we have our hands thus lifed up againſt him. 'Tis like the abſurdity of thoſe, who ſeem to Conſecrate a Temple to the Worſhip of the Living God, and at the ſame time keep their Idols there, and fall down before them. Every Vice is an Idol, Luxury, Intemperance, all ſinful love of Creatures, are Idols: and thoſe who ſatisfie their own diſorder'd Paſſions in theſe or other like engagements, fall down before Idols and Worſhip them, to the contempt of God and his Law: but amongſt theſe, the ſins of Contention, Uncharitableneſs and Envy are with a particular care to be renounc'd; for at a time, when the Son of God comes to lay down his life to make a general Peace, and reconcile

he World with God, not excluding his Enemies, the greateſt Sinners, but even for theſe deſiring to become a Sacrifice of Expiation, there can be no juſt diſpenſation for Animoſities, ill Will and Hatred amongſt Chriſtians, but all theſe are to be cheerfully quitted, in imitation of the infinit Charity of our Redeemer: For what ground can they have for Mercy, who ſhew none to others; or how can they hope for pardon of God, who forgive not their Brother?

The moſt certain means then of receiving advantage from the Mercy of this time, muſt be in following the Apoſtle's advice, in renouncing the evils we have contracted, and ſincerely labouring to put on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: *Induimini Dominum Jeſum.* We muſt meet him in his own Livery: Whatever we ſee practis'd by him, we muſt faithfully endeavour to copy out in our Souls. As therefore we behold in him a total ſeparation from all manner of Sin, from all that is Corrupt and Senſual: as we behold him in the perfect profeſſion of Charity, Humility, Patience, Purity and every way performing his Father's Will; ſo to receive the Bleſſings of his Nativity

and

nd Redemption, we muſt be cloth'd like him, diveſting our ſelves of the corruption of the Old Man, and put on the New, which is not according to Nature, but according to God. This is to be the ſubject of our Prayers and laborious endeavours of this time of *Advent*: 'Tis the Church's Charity to her Children now to call upon them and give them timely notice, that when God's Hands are full of Bleſſings to be pour'd forth upon his Servants, they may be found prepar'd, and not loſe the benefit of this Holy Time thro' their iniquity or neglect. For this end She requires them to mend their dull and ſlothful pace, to ſpur forward with a more active and lively Zeal, in imitation of that overflowing Charity, with which Chriſt comes to us; She commands them now to take ſome pains to put on Chriſt, and not to be ſatisfied, till in their Souls they can diſcover ſome real reſemblance of him. And how groſſly muſt they deceive themſelves, who think there's any thing of this, in a life of Sloth and Sin? Should a Painter deſir'd to repreſent in lively colours *Peace* and *Plenty*; and pretending to have finiſh'd the Piece, bring forth a horrid Scene, frightful with all the ſeveral

veral Calamities of War and Fa-
mine: Should he again undertaking t
describe *Temperance* and *Patience*, p
out all the Extravagancies of Drunke
neſs, Paſſion and Fury: Should he
when ask'd to draw the Beauty of
Noon-day-light in its ſtrongeſt Ray
repreſent the Silence and Horror o
Night: would not he be eſteem'd r
diculous and mad, and juſtly be co
demn'd to loſe his Pay? Now, tho th
be an abſurdity ſcarce to be found
Colors, yet 'tis what repreſents tha
Chriſtians to the life, who undertak
as it were, to copy Chriſt, and ſcar
have one ſtroke, which bears refe
blance with him. His Humility a
Patience are to be imitated by the
and theirs is a life of Pride and Paſſion
His Charity and Labours are to be fo
low'd, and is this done by a life of Idl
neſs, Sloth and Self-love? His Holine
and forſaking the World are to be ado
and lov'd; and is this expreſs'd in t
repeated engagements of Vice and Fo
ly? I can't tell how far Chriſtia
think of this; but certainly they m
imagine God to be an Idol, blind a
ſenſeleſs, if they perſuade themſelve
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'Tis this then ought to be our care at present, to draw a better Copy: not to go on at ease in all our wonted Liberties of Sloth and Sin: but first with the Carver's Hand, cut off all those Deformities, by repeated Strokes, which make us Monsters, more like Brutes than Men: work off all Passions and ill Habits of Vice and Self-love; and then with the Pencil lay on those Gospel-colours of all Christian Virtues, which may effectually render us like our Lord. See then, Christian, at this time, how much thou hast to cut off; Set to the work, and tho' it requires force and violence, be not discourag'd; 'tis thus the rough and deformed Wood is brought by degrees to shape, and becomes a lively Expression of a Glorious Martyr or thy dying Lord. Let this be now thy work; advance something every day; thus by degrees thou wilt come to put on Christ, and be prepar'd for all thy Redeemer's Blessings.

II. *Sunday of* Advent.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 15. V. 4. ends V. 13.

WHatever things have been writ, have been writ for our instruction, that by Patience and the Comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope. The Apostle here declares the Holy Scriptures to have been writ for our Instruction; but in what? He says, *For our instruction in Patience*, and to give us that *Comfort* we here stand in need of, that our *Hope* fail not. This is the end for which the Scriptures were committed to Writing. Wherefore, such as peruse them daily, and are not instructed in *Patience* and this *Comfort*, do not learn, nor receive that benefit, which God has design'd for them; they may repeat Texts and Chapters, and yet be very ignorant in the Scriptures; whilst others, who appear less knowing, may in effect be better

ter instructed in them, by having their Souls more strengthen'd in Patience and Comfort, the true effects of that Divine Nourishment.

Hence it must certainly be a great mistake, to think the Word of God was committed to Writing, that so every unskilful Head might have the opportnity of interpreting it at pleasure, might set up for Prophets and Apostles, erect Churches or Religions, and take thence a Commission to fly in the face of that Authority, which Christ has establish'd and the Scriptures and Creed recommend for the Teaching his Truth. No, this can be nothing but the usurpation of a Power, God has no where given them; and must be censur'd as the rashness of presuming men, who are vain enough to judge themselves sufficiently qualified to be their Expositors and Teachers; tho' at the same time, by being *Unlearned* and *Unstable*, as S *Peter* declares, they run the hazard of interpreting and *wresting them to their own perdition*, 2 *ep.* 3. 16. and but too evidently expose themselves to the Severity of that Sentence pronounc'd in the *Revelations* against those, who *add* or *take away* from what is there writ; since every false Interpretation

of the sacred Text involves this crime, by presumptuously adding, or sacrilegiously taking away from the Truth there deliver'd. And there's no question, this only reason has been the motive to the Church, of using some restriction as to the reading the Scriptures: She is very sensible of the common weakness of Mankind, of the far greater number being *Unlearned* and *Unstable*; and that while they are so, they have this common misery attending them, as not to be sensible of it themselves, but that generally a great Presumption is the Companion of great Ignorance: Hence like a tender Mother, who is oblig'd to take care of her Children, committed to her Charge by Christ himself, she feeds them with the Divine Nourishment of the Holy Scriptures, by faithfully instructing them in all Christian Duties there express'd, without exposing them to the Weakness and Uncertainty of their own private Interpretations, or leaving them to pervert that Sacred Food into Poyson. Were it not for this abuse of Holy Writ, and how great it is, we experience in the almost infinit Sects of this Nation, there would be no restraint in the reading it. And therefore for such,

such, who have any Principles of steddiness to ballance the over-fondness of their own thoughts, there's no difficulty in having this allow'd them; nay, they may be encourag'd to it. And while this liberty is granted to the Judicious and Learned, and the restraint is only in regard of the *Unlearned* and *Unstable*, this cannot in justice or reason be interpreted as a design to keep People in ignorance, or prevent the discovery of supposed Errors; since the Learned would more likely do this, than those that are otherwise; but must be understood as a Charity to these latter, to prevent the mischiefs they might otherwise do themselves, in wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction. For since the *Unlearned* and *Unstable* are too apt to do this, is it not a kindness, to give them a better and safer Guide than themselves, especially such, as Christ himself has appointed for their help, and solemnly engag'd his word, it shall lead them into all Truth? Such a Guide to those, who are in danger of mistaking their way, is certainly the effect of God's infinite Mercy and Solicitude for their Eternal good; and to neglect this mercy must be the presumption of Men

chooſing to hazard the loſing their way under their own uncertain conduct, than be ſafely directed by the help of a ſecure hand, which God has appointed to lead them. And this preſumption is very ſurpriſing, for ſince the Word of God it ſelf has given this caution againſt *private Interpretation* of Scripture, and expreſly declar'd, that many, thro their inconſtancy and inability pervert it to their own eternal ruine: And on the other ſide, has ſo fully recommended his *Holy Catholick Church* to us, not only by inſerting it in the Creed, and obliging all to make Profeſſion of Believing it, but likewiſe, by declaring it to be the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*, promiſing to be with it to the end of the World, That the Gates of Hell ſhould never prevail againſt it, That whoever hear'd it, ſhould hear him, and laying an obligation on all, of hearing it, under the penalty of being otherwiſe reputed as Heathens: Since the Word of God, I ſay, thus declares the Uncertainty and danger of *Private Interpreters*, and recommends the *Church* for a ſure Guide; is it not a ſurpriſing thing, that in an affair of an eternal concern, People ſhould leave what is certain, for an uncertainty;

certainty; and chooſe rather to follow what may probably lead them into danger, than what, on Chriſt's Word, will be ſecurity againſt it? Such Principles as theſe we generally diſlike in all that regards our temporal intereſt; and to be lead by them in the more weighty concern of our Salvation, looks like the effect of an unaccountable Blindneſs.

Thoſe therefore, who deſire to be ſecure, read not the Scripture to be their own Interpreters, in determining Myſteries of Faith, but as to theſe, hear that Guide God has given them, and from which he has promis'd they ſhall hear the Truth; and on this his Promiſe they depend, which cannot fail, and not on the uncertainty of their own apprehenſion, which is ſubject to ſo many Deluſions from Education, Prejudice, Prepoſſeſſion, Pride, Self-love and Intereſt, which are not eaſily diſcern'd, and from which neither Wit, Learning, or Human Abilities are ſecure: But they read the Scripture, for the end it was writ; for their inſtruction in *Patience*, and to receive the *Comfort* it gives: They read it, to learn to ſuffer with Patience all Afflictions, the Provocations and diſagreeable-

greeable Tempers of Men; the Mortality of their Body, the weakneſs and darkneſs to which they are ſubject; the trouble of their own ſins, the humiliation of which they are to ſuffer, without being diſcourag'd or dejected; the method of God's conduct over us, which is not always conform to our inclinations, nor anſwerable to the impatience of our deſires; God has his time, and 'tis our Duty to wait: Patience likewiſe in perſevering in good, and bearing all the diſcouragements it here meets with. The Scripture teaches us to practiſe Patience in all theſe particulars, and furniſhes us with powerful comforts to make us hold out, notwithſtanding all our weakneſs: And, no doubt, but whoever reads the Scripture, not with the Preſumption of Interpreting and Defining, but with the Humility of one, who deſires to be inſtructed in Patience and the practice of other Chriſtian Virtues, will find the fruit of his endeavors in a plentiful Harveſt, and, tho' never ſo unlearned, need not fear being reprov'd, but will rather be encourag'd to drink daily at this Fountain of Life.

III. *Sunday* Advent.

EPISTLE.

Philip. C 4. V. 4. ends V. 7.

Rejoyce always in our Lord, again I say, rejoyce. 'Tis hard to apprehend, how a Soul can love God, and not rejoyce in him: for as we naturally rejoyce in the Prosperity or Success of a Father or Friend, whom we love: so whoever loves God, and considers his Glory, his Happiness, his Holiness, his Justice, must feel interior comforts and rejoyce in God being what he is. This joy is the subject of many *Psalms* and *Hymns*, which we find in Holy Scripture, and such like ought to have a part in the daily Devotions of every Christian. Again, whoever reflects on that frightful State, from which we have been deliver'd, and considers seriously the Misery of a Soul subject to the Devils Tyranny, dragg'd by him to everlasting death, blinded with unreasonable Passions, and impos'd on

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with a thousand gross and criminal delusions, will discover sufficient reason to rejoyce in the Giver of that powerful Grace, whereby they have been brought to the truth of Christianity, and separated, without any merit of theirs, from such great numbers, yet left in the darkness of Ignorance and Error, and in the shadow of death. Thirdly, whoever is sensible of the greatness of those Gifts, which they have receiv'd, in being made Members of his Mystical Body, the adopted Children of God, Heirs of Heaven, and Co-heirs of Christ, and of the unspeakable happiness promis'd to such poor Worms, must necessarily rejoyce in this hope, as in the settlement of an everlasting Inheritance, which is none of their right, but by the Mercy of the Giver, and not to be forfeited but by their fault. From this threefold head of the Love of God, and the consideration of the evils from which we have been deliver'd, of the great Blessings we enjoy and infinitly greater promis'd, the Servants of God have found sufficient matter of joy, such as has rais'd them above the deceitful satisfaction of the World, supported them in Troubles, comforted them in Persecutions

ſecutions and in the terror of Death it ſelf: and ſome degree of it ought to enter into every good Chriſtians Heart; it being very difficult to conceive how a Soul can be diſpos'd to rejoyce in God for ever, who does not begin here. And this more particularly at this time, when the Mercies of our Redeemer's Birth are laid before us, who comes to be our Light, our Comforter, our Phyſician, and at the expence of his blood, to remove all thoſe evils of ſin, which can be the only diſcouragements of a Chriſtian Soul. His coming to call Sinners and find the loſt Sheep; ought to raiſe up all Hearts from dejection and deſpair, and his plentiful Redemption oblige them to joyn in Spirit with the B. Virgin, and rejoice in God our Saviour.

The conſideration of this Duty of rejoicing always in God, obliges us to cenſure and be very apprehenſive of their State, whoſe Souls are ſo Worldly and truly indiſpos'd, as, thro' their own faults, to find no comfort in the performance of any Chriſtian Duty, nor any ſweetneſs in the thoughts of God and his infinit Mercies; and for this end are ever ſeeking abroad for relief, and never eaſie, but amidſt dangerous

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gerous and even sinful Diversions, such as the World is full of for the entertainment of Worldly Souls: these have their Treasure, where their Hearts are, and this being not in God, it is not in him they rejoice: and what then must their condition be at the hour of death, when their Souls going out of this World to appear before God, they are forsaking what they love, and not going to it? This must cause a trouble, and this trouble is but an ill presage of rejoicing ever in God.

There's another sort of Christians, who rejoyce not in God, whose condition is more to be pitied, than condemned, their disorder being more their misfortune than their fault: and these are such, who sincerely desire to seek God, take pains in finding him, have their thoughts on their Duty, and are ever consulting on this subject; but then, thro' the unhappiness of a melancholy and over-fearful temper, are perplex'd with crowds of such apprehensive and disquieting thoughts, that tho' they truly serve God, yet they cannot possibly rejoice or find any comfort in him. Their imagination is very strong and lively, and every phancy that any ways thwarts their Duty, makes

makes a very ſenſible impreſſion in them: then their exceſs of Solicitude encreaſing the horror, they are truly frighted, and paſſing Sentence with their *Fears*, inſtead of framing a deliberate judgment, they haſtily condemn themſelves: thus tho' their guilt be nothing but *imaginary*, and the effect only of an immoderate fear, yet it brings as great a diſquiet with it, as if 'twere real; their minds are oppreſs'd with grief, which caſts them almoſt to deſpair, it is a perpetual diſtraction at their Prayers, and hindrance in all other more Sacred Duties: ſo that however they perform them all, yet 'tis without all ſenſe or feeling of Devotion; and thus they drag on under the uneaſie weight of an oppress'd, dark and comfortleſs Mind: This is their miſery, and what requires the prudent management of a diſcreet Director, to help them in this their Spiritual diſtreſs, and deliver them from the deluſions of a ſubtle Enemy, who ſeeing no hopes of ſeparating them from God by ſin, thus hinders their approaching to him, fills them with fears, that ſo they may never have the liberty or quiet to improve in Love and their more ſubſtantial Duties.

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Their only remedy then must be, under God's Hand, wholy to rest in the direction of their Spiritual Director, to whom they must faithfully lay open their State; and ever strive to admit no other Idea of themselves, but what is according to the judgment he makes of them, without regarding the terrifying suggestions of their own fears. If he thinks better of them, than they do, 'tis what by degrees, they must bring themselves to believe, and carefully put by all other thoughts, that are contrary to his, as what they truly are, Temptations and Delusions: if they apprehend God to be angry with them, or that their Director does not understand their case; away with these thoughts; they are Temptations, the natural consequence of their Disease; the confidence in their Guide ought to over-rule them all. And tho' this may appear like arbitrary, yet 'tis nothing but what is reasonable, just and necessary. For since their own judgment is greatly discompos'd, their Reason clouded with variety of Fears and Passions, what can be more proper and safe for them, than to admit the guidance of anothers hand, and submit to his judgment, which being not disturb'd like

theirs,

theirs, is more capable of giving direction, and preventing the miſchiefs of their blindneſs? This is a general method ordain'd by God for all, ſince the moſt Judicious and Sedate are not allow'd to be the beſt Judges in their own caſe, being expos'd to indiſcernable partialities and miſtakes; with how much more reaſon then ought it to be obſerv'd by theſe, whoſe Judgments are wholy corrupt, and they as truly blind, as violence of Paſſion can poſſibly make them: ſo blind, that they ſee nothing of their own State; make no true conſtruction of themſelves; but without raſhneſs, may be judg'd groſly to miſtake in almoſt every thought relating to their own Diſeaſe: and therefore are ever tormenting themſelves with anxious and diſquieting fears, grieve to exceſs, and ſigh under oppreſſion and diſcouragement, and thus go on, as if 'twere reaſonable and juſt they ſhould do ſo; whereas 'tis a thing wholy unreaſonable and unjuſt, and condemn'd by as many Spiritual Authors, as ſpeak of this Subject? However difficult therefore it may be to renounce their own thoughts, in ſubmiſſion to the judgment of their Director, yet 'tis what they muſt ſtrive

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to do, if ever they intend to be cur'd of this evil; and this not only as to the resisting all interior trouble, and entertaining a more favourable opinion of themselves than their own inclination leads them to; but likewise of frequenting the Sacraments, as often as he shall advise, tho' at the same time they perceive no sensible advantage by them, but may interiorly suffer very much in complying with this Duty: there being no other way for them to disappoint the malicious Snares of their Enemy, who is willing to persuade them, that all their Spiritual Exercises are to no purpose; so by degrees to bring them to a total neglect of them, and lay aside every thing, that may be for their good.

And that they may perform this with some grounds of comfort, I desire them to consider seriously the true State of their Souls, which, I think, are not so indispos'd, but they may justly hope to partake of God's Grace, and receive benefit by the Sacraments. For tho' there be generally an obstinacy of Judgment in them, which makes them difficult to be govern'd; tho' there be a secret Pride at the root, and not so true a distrust and knowledge of themselves,

ſelves, nor ſubmiſſive confidence in God, as there ought, which cauſes that ſurpriſe and vexation at their own failings; yet ſince all this works inſenſibly in them, rather thro' indiſpoſition and ill temper of Body, than by affectation or choice, 'tis to be hop'd, they have not the guilt, but only the misfortune, of theſe evils. And then on the other ſide, there's a great portion of good at the bottom of all: For why is it, they diſquiet and afflict themſelves ſo much? Does it not ariſe from the apprehenſion they have of not doing their Duty, and having offended God, and the fear of his being angry with them? Why is it th y conſult their Director, and ſo frequently deſire to be adviſ'd? Is not this an argument of their not being in love with their failings, and an evident deſire of amendment? There's a good Will therefore, a good Deſire, a good Heart at the bottom, and commonly a total alienation of the Mind from all the Follies, Vanities and vicious Corruptions of the World; ſo that their whole concern is center'd in the great Affair of their Soul, the avoiding of evil, the ſervice of God and their own Salvation: and tho' they are ſubject to very great Spi-

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ritual Indiſcretions and ill management, yet ſince their Hearts are ſincere in God, he cannot poſſibly reject them, nor can they reaſonably doubt of being prepar'd for receiving benefit in the Sacraments. Let them learn Patience in their trouble, Humility under the conduct of God, be contented with the meaſure of Grace he is pleas'd to give them, and endeavour to be obedient to their Director, and, no queſtion, they'll come by degrees out of their Oppreſſion and Darkneſs, and rejoyce in our Lord.

IV. *Sunday of Advent.*

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 5.

IT *is requir'd of those, that are Dispensers* of the Mysteries of God, *that they be Faithful.* S. *Paul* having inform'd the *Corinthians* of his own Character, that they ought to regard him, as likewise all the Pastors of God's Church, as the Ministers of Christ and Dispensers of the Mysteries of God; that the Heavenly Treasures are entrusted in their hands; that in the Name and by the Authority of God, they are to instruct the faithful in his Holy Mysteries, and apply to them the Merits and Graces of Christ's Passion: Then adds That the thing requir'd from these Dispensers, is, That they be Faithful.

1. To God, in publishing his Sacred Truths with Zeal, defending them with Courage, and managing them with Prudence.

2. To

2. To Jesus Christ, in honoring his Ministry by a Holy Life resembling his; in Preaching his Mysteries and the Maxims of his Gospel in all purity, without disguising them in favour of the World or Corruption; and in applying the Sacraments of his Grace with Charity and the Spirit of Discretion, not admitting the Unworthy to prophane them.

3. They are to be faithful to the Church and the Souls under their charge, in leading them in the ways of God's Commandments with a watchful and laborious diligence, in supporting them with a Christian condescendence, and encouraging them by their good Example.

Lastly, They are to be Faithful, in not seeking, what they have renounc'd, to be Great, to be Rich, to be Powerful; but using all endeavors to establish his power only, whose Ministers they are; being always in the disposition of good Servants, ever ready to labour, ready to obey. Thus are Pastors to be Faithful in the whole charge they have undertaken: and to be wanting in any part of it, either of Instruction, Watchfulness, Labour or Good Example, &c. is to be wanting in what

S. *Paul*

S. *Paul* says, is requir'd of them; which is truly so very great, that were it seriously consider'd, as to the difficulty and concern of every particular, I think very few would thrust themselves upon it, and none engage in it, without a great apprehension and distrust of themselves, and daily seeking the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to carry them thro' it.

As for my own part, I find the charge so great, that whether in the Worthy approaching every day to the Altar; in instructing the Ignorant; in spurring on the slothful; in treating with Vicious and Worldly Souls; in giving advice in affairs of Eternity; in administring the Sacraments; in distinguishing Weakness from Unworthiness, so as not to terrifie and discourage the one or admit the other; in discerning betwixt Practice and Right, and infinit other perplexities that occur, I must needs confess my Weakness, I know not how to be Faithful to what I have undertaken. I am daily at a loss, *contristatus sum in exercitatione mea*; I labour as under a burthen; and if God do's not assist, direct and support me, I shall be infinitly wanting to my obligation;

how shall I render an account of all those Souls, who have been committed to my charge! Happy are those Pastors, who in preparing for this Sacred Function, have taken care, by the laborious exercises of Mortification and Virtue, to obtain a plentiful assistance of the Holy Spirit, by whose direction they may be secur'd against all the mischievous effects of Human Darkness, Weakness, Ignorance, Negligence and Indiscretion; and who, every day, thro' the great sense of their own inability, earnestly implore his help and light, to carry them thro' all the difficulties of their obligation, and make them Faithful to every part of it, whether in regard of themselves or their Neighbours. And certainly none are more unhappy, amongst all Christians, than those, who having the charge of Pastors, have not the Pastoral Spirit; who have undertaken it on Temporal Motives, without being call'd of God; who have not been solicitous to obtain the Divine Succors suitable to their obligation; who live the common Life of the World, giving encouragement to liberty and corruption; and if they have but made their own Nest so well

as to be pretty secure against temporal want themselves, think little of the Spiritual Necessities of their Neighbours, or of being Faithful to the many and great Duties of their State: Can these ever expect the happy welcome of *Euge serve bone & Fidelis!* Deliver me, O God, and all my Brethren, the Pastors of thy Church, from this fatal blindness, and by the power of thy Spirit, having remov'd these evils, make us Faithful to our charge.

Pastors then are to be Faithful; but what is this to the People? Yes, it is to them: For as it is requir'd of Pastors, that they be Faithful, so the same is requir'd of the People: And if the Pastor be Faithful, and the People not; the Pastor's Fidelity will be the aggravation of their Crimes: If he carefully labours to inform them of their Duty, and they take no care to learn; if he lays before them the Maxims of the Gospel in their purity, and presses them to live by the Spirit of Christ, and they attend to the Maxims of the World, and follow the Practices and Liberties of Men; his Fruitless Labours will be their Judgment, and they shall not only give an account of their

own sins, but likewise of all the Seed and Care, that has been lost upon them. The People therefore are to be Faithful, as well as the Pastor.

And this still on another account: For tho' Pastors have the charge of dispensing the Mysteries of God, and for this reason, are to be Faithful; yet all others, of what condition soever, have their charge under God too, have a Trust reposed in them, and therefore are likewise to be Faithful to him, to whom they must all render an account, how they have satisfied their Trust. Magistrates, and all in Office and Power have a charge under God, of administring Justice, and answering all the obligations they have undertaken: and if These make their Employments subservient only to their interest, seekonly to enrich themselves, let human Respects, Favor or Party be the Rule of their conduct; how are they Faithful to their Trust? Here it is, Judges, Justices, Councellors, Advocates, Attorneys, Collectors, Overseers of the Poor, Guardians, Executors, Trustees, &c. are in particular to examine their management: for as far as these act without regard to Justice and Truth,

Truth, biass'd by any private consideration; as far as any Parties concern'd suffer thro' their sloth or neglect, so far are they Faithless to their Duties, and must answer it to the Supreme Overseer, who keeps an exact Register of all their Proceedings, where their own unjust Gain and the Losses of others will appear in judgment against them. Again, Husband and Wife have a charge, under God, of each other, and Both of their Children and Servants; every House-keeper a charge of their Family; Shop-keepers are to be Faithful to those they deal with; Workmen and Labourers to those that employ them; School-Masters to their Scholars; Children to their Parents, and all manner of Servants to their Masters. Each state has its particular obligations respectively belonging to it; and 'tis not sufficient for Christians to observe the General Duties, in which all are concern'd, set down in the Commandments; but they are to be exact too in satisfying all such obligations which their Profession or State brings on them, as they stand recorded in the Epistles of Holy Writ, where S. *Paul* lays before every one the Duties of

their ſtate, and requires them to be Faithful in them. 'Tis for want of this care, there are ſo many, who, according to the General method of their Lives, ſeem not to offend directly againſt any one of the Commandments, and therefore have the reputation of Good Chriſtians; and yet at the ſame time, are very great Sinners, in being notoriouſly wanting to the obligations of their Condition, are ill Parents, Careleſs Maſters, Wicked Truſtees, Unjuſt Stewards, *&c.*

And now, tho' there cannot well be any, who are not thus particularly engag'd ſome way or other, either as *Parents*, *Maſters*, &c. Yet if there be ſuch, who think themſelves exempt; let them remember, they have a Charge ſtill, in which they are to be Faithful; a Charge of their *Time*, of their *Eſtate*, of their *Health* and of their *Soul*: Theſe they have in Truſt, and 'tis requir'd of them to be Juſt and Faithful in this their charge: And, tho' they may think, they have but little to do, I think they have more to do than any; it being a very difficult task for People, who have no employment, to be Faithful to

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their Truſt; ſince their whole Life is a continual Temptation, both as to miſſpending their *Time* and their *Mony* and doing injury to the *Health* both of *Body* and *Soul*: And I fear, there are none leſs prepar'd to give an account of theſe, than they who enjoy the largeſt ſhare of them; and yet they are things, of which they muſt one day give an account; and how ſhall they do this, if they are not Faithful in them? We beſeech thee therefore, O God, to teach all thy Faithful this Leſſon, that they may ſeriouſly conſider all they have receiv'd from thee, and likewiſe the full extent of all the Truſt and Charge they hold under thee: Give to Paſtors and People grace and ſtrength proportion'd to their ſeveral Duties, that overcoming all difficulties, they may be found Faithful, when ſummon'd to give up their accounts to Thee.

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas.

EPISTLE.

Gal. C. 4. V. 1. ends. V. 7.

THE fulneſs of time being come; God ſent his Son. In this ſhort Epiſtle St. *Paul* lays before us the Myſtery of Man's Redemption undertook by Chriſt, and which we celebrate at this time: That God ſent his Only Son, the Second Perſon of the B. Trinity, into the World; that he became Man, took a Body, not created immediately by the Hand of God, as was that of *Adam*, but form'd of a Woman; that he was born an Infant, was ſubject to the Law made for Sinners; that he offer'd himſelf a Sacrifice for Sin; rais'd Sinners to the Dignity of being the Children of God; open'd his Breaſt and gave his Spirit to Sinners, and admitted his very Enemies and Murtherers to be Co-heirs with him of his Eternal Inheritance. This is the Bleſſing, the Patriarchs and

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Prophets so many Ages sigh'd and pray'd for, and which being accomplish'd in the fulness of time, we at present Celebrate, but can never sufficiently adore; it being the wonderful effect of an infinit Mercy, without any the least desert on our part. For all Mankind Universally lying under the guilt of Sin, was by this render'd an Enemy to God, and incapable of doing any thing, whereby to make peace with him, and therefore had he not been Redeem'd must necessarily have been lost for ever. But what then! Would God have been less happy, if Man had been for ever miserable? Or if God had left Man, as he did the Faln Angels, under the eternal guilt of his sin, would this have lessen'd that infinit Bliss, which God essentially enjoys within himself? Nothing of all this: and therefore, as the leaving the unhappy Angels in their sin, was the effect of his Justice; so his redeeming Man from sin, was the sole effect of his Mercy. But then to deliver up his Son, for to redeem a Slave, to subject him to all the miseries of Man; to expose him to a life of Contempt and Reproaches, to Persecutions, Torments, and the most ignominious Death, this is the overflowing and excess of such an infi-

infinit Mercy, that as we believe it without comprehending it, so, I fear, we celebrate the memory of it, without seriously thinking of it, or returning the least part of that Adoration and Gratitude, which we are truly oblig'd. If we did but once seriously reflect, what it is to be running head-long into Hell, and when now on the very brink, consider the Son of God taking on him the punishment due to our sins, and offering his most Sacred Blood as the price of our Redemption from this state of Misery; and not only to rescue us from eternal death, but even entitle us to everlasting happiness; this reflection would be sufficient to imprint a lasting sense of Gratitude and Love in our Hearts, not to be forgot under all the attempts of Worldly Flatteries or Terrors, and sufficient to preserve us in a perpetual Fidelity to so Merciful a God, so Loving a Redeemer; 'tis for this end the Church has appointed this yearly Solemnity, to encourage all her Children, not only to glance at it in a passing Thought, but to offer it for the more serious entertainment of their Hearts all the eight days of this *Octave*; and those who feel not a sense of it, ought to be confounded at least

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at their insensibility: The same ought to be renew'd every day, as often as we bow at the most Holy Name of *Jesus*, letting this external respect be the expression and fruit of our inward Love and Adoration so justly due to the Mercies of our Redeemer: The same is daily suggested to us in the *Creed*, and St. *John*'s *Gospel*; for why is, that at the repeating those words; *He took Flesh and was made Man*: and *The Word was made Flesh*; both Priest and People are commanded to kneel down, but only to be a continual remembrance of this great Mercy, and excite in them all the Sentiments of Reverence and Gratitude, the daily Tribute of every True Believer.

But more than this is expected from Christians; for since Christ redeem'd us, that, as the Apostle here says, we might become the Adopted Children of God, and receiving his Spirit, might in that cry; *Abba, Father*; every Christian ought to give proof of his Redemption, by manifesting in his life this Adoption, and that he lives by the Spirit of Christ: So that, as those unhappy Souls, who have not a Knowledge or practical Faith of this Mystery, are directed wholy by the Principles of corrupt

corrupt nature, by the Suggestions of Flesh and Blood, by Self-love and the Maxims of the World, and thus shew themselves the Children of the First *Adam*; so true Christians, ought so powerfully to be influenc'd by the rules of the Gospel, in contradiction to all other Inclinations, as to evidence the being of Christ's Spirit within them, and consequently, that they are the Children of God. And is this the Character of Christians? 'Tis the Scripture Character of what they ought to be; they are all oblig'd to adore God in this Spirit, to live by this Spirit and walk by this Spirit: but so miserable is the State of Christendom at present, that 'tis enough to draw Sighs and Tears from all those faithful Souls who have any love for God or his Church, to see such a universal corruption amongst them, that there are great numbers living in the open practice of Vice, so as to be far beneath the degree of Moral Heathens; and that others who have a horror of this wickedness and pretend to Piety, come yet so much short of what they ought to be, that instead of living by the Spirit of Christ, they live by the Spirit of Self-love and the World. Let but any one view the

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general method; how much there is every where, of Uncharitableness, Dissensions and Detractions; how great a Zeal for Interest and Parties; how little for Justice and Truth; how all generally seek themselves, admire Vanity and Follies, study their Pleasure and Ease, neglect Order and Discipline in their Families, avoid every thing that mortifies, and all works of Penance; and then observe the common Excess in Tables, Cloths and Furniture, &c. and then tell me, what there is in all this of the Spirit of Christ, or wherein a Christian can truly say, *Abba, Father*, whilst Christ is not the Father of any thing of this, but most certainly *Self-love* and the *World*: not that it can be expected, in this State of Corruption, a Christian should be wholy exempt from the effects of these evils; no, this is not a priviledge even of the best: but yet so much is expected from them, as to have a dislike of every degree of Corruption, to which they are subject, to lament this their misery, humble themselves under it, make War against it, and by Holy Exercises of Piety and Self-denial, lessen or weaken it what they are able. But as for living in the profess'd practice of them,

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approving and ſupporting them, making the improvement of them their Study, the ſubject of their Thoughts, of their daily Expence and Entertainment, and thinking themſelves well in this Profeſſion; all this is wholy diſagreeable to a Chriſtians Character, is not conformable to the Principles of the Goſpel and St. *Paul*; and has nothing of the Spirit of Chriſt in it, being the life of the Natural Man, but not of the Spiritual: and while they thus far depart from the ways of Chriſt, following a Rule, which is not his, I deſire them ſeriouſly to conſider their State, and earneſtly beg of God to eſtabliſh them in a more ſecure way, where the ſolid effects of their Redemption may be more manifeſt in them.

Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 12. V. 1. ends V. 5.

Conform not your ſelves to this World; but be reform'd in the newneſs of your Spirit. This Leſſon is often repeated, and 'tis nothing but neceſſary; it being a very difficult thing to live in the World, and not conform to it. Example and Cuſtom are very powerful and make ſtrong impreſſions on the Soul; and for a Chriſtian to perſuade himſelf not to do what he ſees almoſt every body do, is the ſame thing as to ſtand againſt the violence of a Torrent; and yet 'tis in the midſt of this Torrent every Chriſtian is Born, in this he is Educated, and tho' he be not commanded to retire from it, yet he is commanded ſo to reſiſt it, as not to be carried

ried away with it: *Nolite conformari huic sæculo.* And were this obligation only in regard of Notorious Irregularities and Scandalous Vices, the task were not so great, because in this a Christian has the encouragement of great numbers, who so far espouse the cause of Virtue, as to oppose every thing, that is openly contrary to it, and so they are a mutual help and support to one another: But this Duty extending yet farther, to such disorders, which are not reputed contrary to Piety, and are the common practice of the greater number of Christians, who are esteem'd regular and virtuous; this makes the difficulty almost insuperable, since by standing against these, he necessarily draws on himself the odium of Particularity and Bigotry, and must, by consequence, be reputed to condemn all those, who live in the practice of what, by avoiding, he censures as not allowable in a Follower of the Gospel. And yet this is the task a Christian must undertake; even this part he must stand against as well as the former; not only resisting the profess'd and open, but also the more hidden Enemies of his Salvation.

Amongst

Amongſt theſe I reckon all ſuch Chriſtians, who being no ways Scandalous, are yet poſſeſs'd with all the Paſſions of the World, who admire Honours and Preferments, have their Hearts and Thoughts taken up with Vanity and the Solicitude of pleaſing the World, have a love and eſteem for things preſent, are fond of all Divertiſements, ſtudy their own Eaſe and Convenience, are forgetful of the Goods and Evils of the next life, have a contempt for every thing that this World diſeſteems; In fine, have all their Affections and Thoughts of preſent happineſs regulated by the conformity every thing has either to the love of themſelves, or the opinion and eſteem of this World. All Perſons, whoſe juſt Character this is, I cannot but look on as People conforming to the World, that is, doing the very thing St. *Paul* requires all good Chriſtians to avoid: and tho' their number may be very great, and their Reputation generally good, yet inaſmuch as they take a courſe not agreeable to God's Word, their Authority and Practice ought not to prevail on any, that tender their Salvation, to tread over their ſteps; but their method

thod is little leſs to be apprehended, than that of notorious Offenders.

The reaſon is already hinted; becauſe 'tis declar'd againſt by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, the beſt Guides to Eternity; and if it be not expreſly ſinful, is at leaſt ſuch, as leads to ſin, and evidently hazards Salvation: and therefore, as good Parents, who are Solicitous for their Childrens good, are not only careful to keep them out of the Company of ſuch as are publick Criminals; but likewiſe from the Converſation and Familiarity of thoſe, who encourage Liberty and have no regard to any rules of Order and Diſcipline in their Families; becauſe they know theſe are the ſteps to greater evils, and in ſuch Company their Children receive ſuch Seeds, which generally of courſe, grow up into all manner of Irregularities and Scandals: So thoſe Chriſtians, who are Solicitous for their own Eternal Well-fare, decline not only what is evidently ſinful, but whatever leads to it; becauſe they are ſenſible, this courſe carries them upon Rocks and Shelves, whence very few ever get off, but by Ship-wrack and the loſs of all. For this reaſon, *David* is not only content

tent to declare his abhorrence of all open iniquity: *Iniquitatem odio habui & abominatus sum*: But often repeats his Petition to Almighty God, beseeching him to keep him out of the *way of Iniquity*: *Viam iniquitatis amove a me*: and as often prays, that all his steps may be directed according to God's Word; *Gressus meos dirige secundum eloquium tuum.* For he knew, that not only *Iniquity*, but likewise the *way of Iniquity* is to be avoided by God's Faithful Servants; and that if all his steps were not directed by God's Word, he should soon find himself out of the way. Now thus it is with all the ways of *Self-love* and the *World*; if they do not arise to that excess, as to be down-right sins; yet whoever walks in them without great caution, will soon find himself in the *way of Iniquity*, in the way of departing from God: it being impossible for a Man to serve and love Two Masters: and once a Heart is possess'd with the love of the World, admires its Satisfactions and Greatness; will not the World soon have the command of such a Soul? And how then will it serve and obey God? No, God will in the end be forsaken and the World obey'd. And

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tho' this may not appear in every ſtep of this diſorder, yet 'tis what inſenſibly grows upon Men, and the unwillingneſs they have of beliving themſelves to be in the way of Iniquity, is the occaſion of their going on in this way, till they are wholly ſeparated from God. 'Tis this Deluſion in compliance with their Inclinations to *Themſelves* and the *World*, is the ruin of Thouſands, and of ſo many Great Families, that are wholly loſt to Piety and Faith, I believe the Greater part may owe all their miſcarriage to this inconſiderate Blindneſs. They begin at firſt with the love of *Vanity* and *Diverſions*, and look on this as nothing but what Decency and Health exacts from them; they go on under this Cover, till all *Order* and *Diſcipline* is loſt in themſelves and their Families, and no moderation obſerv'd in their Expences: Hence the *Time of Praying and Reading in the Evenings* is often given to Company and Entertainments; and ill hours in going to Bed, oblige them to indulge themſelves in reſt and ſleep next Morning; and 'tis well if they get to Prayers by Noon; and then, how eaſily are they diverted, or with

with what ſloth and indevotion are they perform'd? And all this while, they ſay; Where is the Sin? Is it a Sin to play at Cards? Is it a Sin to be in Company? Is it a ſin to retire late, or to ſleep long when they want it? And if not ſinful; what need of mending 't?

Unhappy Chriſtians, to be thus runing on to a Precipice, and think themſelves ſafe, becauſe they don't fall every ſtep they take! Is it not by this way infinit numbers have miſerably periſh'd? And ought not this oblige you to put a ſtop to this unhappy courſe, where you have ruine before you? Change but the caſe from your Souls to your Bodies, and obſerve there how far you are from this Raſhneſs? If you hear but of a River or a dangerous Way before you, where many have been loſt, upon attempting to paſs, you preſently cry out; *Hold, go back; take another way*: And why ſo, are you drowning or falling? No, but if we go on, we ſhall come ſoon to this misfortune; who will venture, where ſo many have periſh'd? And ought there not to be a like caution in the more important concern of your Souls, where you

you have so great danger before you; and, it may be, not only danger; but if you examine strictly, will likely find your selves living in such a state, as you cannot reasonably judge safe to die in? For what is the whole method of your Lives, but loving and seeking your selves? What is it but indulging flesh and blood; gratifying your own Corruption and Weakness, indulging disorderly and worldly Passion? Where is the Love of God? How do you love him with all your heart and with all your strength? How do you seek first the Kingdom of God and the things that are above? How do you walk in the Newness of Life? Where are you transform'd into Christ? Where is his Life manifested in yours? Where is the denial of your selves? Where is the worthy fruits of Penance? And yet is not this requir'd of you? Is it not this the whole Gospel exacts from every Christian? Ask not therefore, Where is your Sin? For if you are not what Christians should be, you cannot possibly pretend an exemption from it: There may be great sins, without great Crimes: To be free from these latter, may make a Moral Heathen; but

but 'tis not enough to make a Good Chriſtian. But this is a Leſſon muſt be taught by Thee, O God; thy powerful Grace muſt prepare Souls to receive it: For a General Corruption has given ſuch Authority to the *Broad way*, that thy Goſpel is not now a Scandal only to *Jews*, but, I fear, to Chriſtians alſo; who eaſily take offence at ſuch Truths of thine, which agree not with their Practice, and are like to make them uneaſie: Remedy this ſpreading evil, I beſeech thee; and ſince Thou haſt commanded thy Followers not to conform to this World, but to be reform'd in the Newneſs of Spirit, awaken their Souls, that they may truly underſtand it, and give them ſtrength ſincerely to practice it.

II. *Sunday after Epiphany.*

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 12. V. 6. ends V. 16.

THis Epiſtle is an Abridgment of all Chriſtian Duties; to read it over and conſider it, is Sermon enough for one day, and may ſerve for the Meaſure of a Chriſtian life; happy they, who live up to it; but they cannot be ſo, who take no care to obſerve it. Let all then be attentive, and examine themſelves, as they go along, for none can pretend to be unconcern'd; and as often as they deſire to know the true ſtate of their Souls, let them come to this Rule.

The Firſt thing requir'd is General; That all Chriſtians would conſider the State, wherein God has placed them, as likewiſe thoſe Gifts and Graces, they have receiv'd, ſo as to be Faithful in the good uſe of them, and ſolicitous to

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discharge well that particular Duty, to which every one is call'd. 'Tis medling with other Peoples concerns, and the neglect of our own, is the occasion of great miscarriages and disorders; and whoever designs seriously either quiet of mind, or to be free from distracting thoughts, or to perform well the obligations of their state, must first consider what those Obligations are, then make them their Business; and having fix'd these bounds, pass them not, except only when *Necessity* or *Charity* dispenses with them: All beyond this is generally nothing but the effects of Curiosity, or a Busie Temper, and greatly prejudices that Freedom of Mind necessary for the due performance of all Spiritual and Temporal Duties: For all Dissipation of thoughts being the Christians hindrance, the occasion of it ought to be cut off, as much as may be, and ever be resisted as a Temptation. Our unavoidable Distractions are too many; there's no need of adding to them.

This advice is by the Apostle first applied to Pastors; That they would confine themselves to their Ministry; not charging themselves with the adminis-

ſtration of temporal Affairs or Secular Employs; but wholly take up their time and thoughts, in *Expounding, Inſtructing* and *Exhorting*. The Ignorance and Vice of the World make the Practice of theſe Duties indiſpenſable; and they who have undertaken this charge, and either omit them thro' Sloth, or let other affairs take place, are not Paſtors but Idols: *Os habent & non loquuntur.*

Then 'tis applied to all, who have any ſort of Superiority; That they would be ſolicitous in ſatisfying the reſpective Obligations they have taken on them. Here all Magiſtrates, Officers, Parents, Maſters are concern'd; there being not one of theſe Characters, which brings not a burthen with it, extending their care beyond themſelves; and if their Solicitude be not of equal extent with their Obligation, they are wanting in their Duty, are not juſt and faithful Servants, and therefore cannot be Good Chriſtians.

The Apoſtle then gives direction in particular Duties belonging to all Chriſtians.

1. As

1. As to Giving of Alms: *Qui tribuit in simplicitate*: Requiring all distribution of Charity to be perform'd, not on human respects or for vanity, but in singleness of heart, regarding God alone and the Necessity of our Neighbour. Hence those, who have the disposing of any Common Collection, the recommending to Hospitals or Funds, or Benefices, &c. ought to have this essential quality of doing all with simplicity of heart, letting those take place, who are best qualified, and come nearest the design of the Giver: For if any *Favour* or *Interest* determines the choice, this is not what is prescrib'd, but double-dealing. And as for such, who being in *Trust* for the Poor, as *Collectors* or *Overseers*, and either enrich themselves by their Stock, turning it to their own advantage by defrauding them; or expend any part of it (beyond what is strictly allow'd) in Treats and Taverns, and set the charge of their Entertainments on the Poor's Score, this must be an abomination before God, and an injustice, against which the Crys of the Poor call aloud for Revenge. S. *Paul* adds to this, that all Voluntary Alms

and Works of Mercy, ought to be done with a *Chearful heart*; *Qui miseretur in hilaritate.* It ought to be a joy to Christians, that God will accept of them to be the Instruments of his Providence, in assisting his Servants and Children; and that by this, they have a Means of exchanging their Temporal Goods for Eternal: 'Tis a double Mercy to relieve the Distressed by Alms, and Comfort them in the manner of doing it. All sharpness and harshness to the Poor is in this condemn'd; they are to be help'd with Cheerfulness; and when refus'd, it must be done with Sweetness: They give an Alms, who Compassionate them, if they cannot otherwise assist them.

2. He requires, that all Christians in their Friendship and love to one another, be sincere, without dissembling, flattery or design of Interest: That they regard one another, as having God for their Father, and being all Members of Jesus Christ.

3. That they have a horror of all that is Evil, and a love for all Good: For

For how can they be faithful Servants of Christ, if they espouse not his interest, or abandon him to gratifie themselves?

4. That they have Charity for every Neighbour, and a Tenderness truly Fraternal; this ought to be Holy, as being a branch of the love of God, and therefore not to be corrupted with unbecoming and sensual Familiarities: It ought to be Humble, and therefore ever watchful to prevent others in the common Testimonies of Deference and Honour.

5. That they be Vigilant in every Duty, and Fervent in Spirit; because they serve God in whatever they do; they serve him, whose Eye is ever upon them; and sloth or neglect can never prevail, but they must be wanting to Justice or Charity.

6. That they have always Comfort in the Hope of Eternal Life: And therefore a Christian's principal satisfaction ought not to be in the agreeable sweetness of Friendship, nor in the Enjoyments or Goods of this Life; but

in the hopes and expectation of the Goods to come: And the Comfort grounded on this Hope is not to be loſt, in the midſt of tribulation and diſtreſs: *In tribulatione Patientes*; the proſpect of Eternity, muſt take off from the weight of theſe momentary evils, and be the ſupport of a Soul, till its deliverance comes.

7. They muſt be Fervent in Prayer: *Orationi inſtantes*: Becauſe 'tis by this Holy Exerciſe they are to obtain of God what they want: One would think the Neceſſity of our condition, the uncertainty of our ſtate; our Circumſtances of having an Eternity before us, without any poſſibility of returning, if once we miſs our way, &c. ſhould oblige us to Attention, Conſtancy and Fervor in our Prayers, for the obtaining help of him, by whoſe Grace and Power alone, we can be ſecure againſt the dangers of our ſtate. But here's the ſubject of our miſery and confuſion: We know our own Weakneſs and infinit Neceſſities, and yet are ſo ſtupid, as not to ask for help, let every trifling Phancy take off our thoughts from this ſo great concern; and too often,

often, by our irreverence and indevotion, ſhut his hands againſt us, of whom we pretend to ask for relief. 'Tis an afflicting thought to conſider, how many provocations are given to God at the very Altar, the very place of Mercy; and to reflect on the great indecencies in the Congregation in time of Publick Worſhip, is enough to believe, that great numbers, who come there, leave their Reaſon and Faith behind them: For who can imagine, that has either, that ſenſual Gazing, idle Tattling, and deſign'd Vanities are becoming Entertainments of Souls in their Addreſſes to God? Or can theſe expect Bleſſings, who in their way of ſeeking them, exaſperate him, who is to be the Giver? Theſe go to the place of Prayer, but certainly without a ſenſe of their Neceſſities or of their dependance on God; and being ſo far from what the Apoſtle requires, are in danger of carrying back Curſes inſtead of Bleſſings; and where then ſhall theſe find pardon, who thus before the Mercy-ſeat encreaſe the number of their ſins? Fervent Prayer is the exerciſe of Chriſtians; but where is the Chriſtianity in the practice of this Intolerable Inſolence?

8. They

8. They are to relieve the Neceſſities of God's Servants and practice Hoſpitality: How does this agree with expenſive Entertainments? If ſpending Money to feed our Vices, ſupport our Liberties, and ſatisfie the diſorder'd inclinations of our Curioſity, Vanity, Ambition and ſenſual Appetites had been commanded, I ſee how faithful Chriſtians would have been in obſerving it. But when theſe Corrupt ways devour now what is commanded to be given to the Neceſſitous and Strangers, it may be eaſily imagin'd, what accounts theſe will make up, who practiſe it: Let them have a care they be not caſt out with Thieves and Murtherers; their Profeſſion and Sin being much the ſame.

9. They are to Bleſs thoſe that Perſecute them: Animoſities, Malice, Hatred, Imprecations and Ill-wiſhes are to be renounc'd by the Followers of Jeſus, who dyed Praying for his Perſecutors: And yet how much is there of this corruption amongſt thoſe, who ſay, they follow him?

10. They

10. They are to partake in the Comforts and Afflictions of their Neighbours, be united in the ſame Sentiments; not ſeek what is eſteem'd great in this World, but accommodate themſelves to what is reputed Mean and Humble.

Theſe are ſome Principal Duties recommended by S. *Paul* to all Chriſtians; and yet, O God, in how very few are they found? All have the Name, but few the Practice of what they undertake. It ought to be the ſubject then of this Days Exerciſe, to examine our ſelves by this Holy Rule, and truly reſolve to uſe our beſt endeavors in order to our conforming to it. 'Tis ſomething to Read and Think, but without Doing more, our Work will only be thought of, but never Done.

III. *Sunday after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 12. V. 16. ends V. 21.

THis is a continuation of the foregoing *Epistle*, and the Subject of it are other Duties, which ought to be the Practice of every Christian.

The First, is a recommendation of interior Humility: that the Christian be careful, not to be Wise in his own Opinion: *Nolite esse prudentes apud vosmetipsos.* Men are very different in their Capacities and Abilities; and yet 'tis permitted to none to glory in the advantage they have above their Neighbours, since whatever it be, it is the Gift of God and belongs to him; and is ever under a perpetual necessity of being directed and applied by his Light and Grace for the discerning the Truth.

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It is often in need of being improv'd and enlarg'd on many occasions; and otherwise all Human Light will prove a Principle of Error, and by avoiding one inconvenience, will lead into another. We are therefore all in a total dependance on God; our confidence must be in the conduct of his Wisdom and not our own, without this we cannot possibly avoid going out of the way: Wherefore, instead of esteeming our selves wise, we are rather to consider our selves as Blind, and as having no other means of going right, but by demanding and following the direction of God. Hence all those ought to be very jealous of themselves, who on the confidence of their Abilities and Knowledge, undertaking to be their own Expositors in Mysteries of Faith, and their own Directors in the difficulties of Conscience, withdraw themselves from that Authority and Help, which God has appointed to secure them against all the mistakes of their own Thoughts. For it being the effect of God's Goodness, who knows the weakness of Man, to appoint him Guides for his Direction; it can be only the effect of Man's weakness, either to distrust or think such

ſuch Guides unneceſſary, upon the confidence of his own light. This weakneſs in ſome is Obſtinacy, in others Paſſion and Diſcontent, in others immoderate Fears and Scrupuloſity, in others a Reſerv'd Temper: But whatever it be, 'tis always unhappy, depriving a Chriſtian of that better light, which Heaven has ordain'd for him; 'tis always the fruit of open or ſome hidden pride, which puts him upon dangerous byways, when there's a plain Road before him. For when God has commanded us to Captivate our Will, in obedience to his Law, by ſelf-denials, and our Underſtanding to his Truths by Faith; this ſhews our Weakneſs, and that to be a true Chriſtian one muſt be truly Humble; and there can be no ſafer way, than to follow the ſame method in all the difficulties of Human Life; it being moſt ſuitable to the Divine Providence, and moſt comfortable to us in all our Infirmities and Darkneſs; and nothing can ſo eaſily draw upon us the effects of our own Folly and Indiſcretion, as to be Wiſe in our own Conceits.

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The Second is a Duty of Charity, *Not to return evil for evil*: And whoever obſerves it not, does himſelf a much greater injury, than what he reſents as done him by his Neighbour. The evil receiv'd can be only ſome Temporal Inconvenience; but evil return'd, is the evil of ſin, which to a True Chriſtian is the only evil he knows: And therefore it muſt be ever unreaſonable for him to bring this miſchief on himſelf. This Duty the Apoſtle repeats again in other terms, forbidding Chriſtians to revenge their own cauſe; and he gives the reaſon; Becauſe God has reſerv'd all Vengeance to himſelf: He then that receives an injury with patience, puts his cauſe in God's hands, and certainly gains him on his ſide: But he that undertakes to revenge his own Quarrel, is an unjuſt Uſurper of a power, that belongs not to him, and in this makes God his Enemy, ſo that inſtead of one, he complain'd of, by his own ill management he has now two.

Wherefore the Apoſtle preſſes the ſame in a Third Duty, requiring Chriſtians to preſerve Peace, as far as in them

them lies, with all. Here's a Condition put; becauſe there are ſome ſo perverſe, as to hate Juſtice and Truth, and will take offence from thoſe, who eſpouſe their Cauſe; which however is not to be abandon'd on the apprehenſion of their diſpleaſure: In this caſe Peace is often broken, and Good Chriſtians are engag'd in it, tho' not in the guilt, ſince, bating the exceſſes of indiſcreet Zeal, there can be no tranſgreſſion in being Advocates for Juſtice or Truth. But then care is to be us'd not to cover all the effects of unreaſonable Paſſion with this Plea; for ſince none Quarrel, but with the preſumption of Juſtice on their ſide, they may hence think to juſtifie all their heats: But S. *Paul* removes the ground of this pretext, by informing us, that peaceable Methods are the moſt effectual for defending the cauſe of Virtue, and that there's no need of breaking Charity to maintain Truth. All Men cannot be of the ſame judgment at all times; Temper and Conſtitution lay the ground of Difference; Education, Cuſtom, Intereſt, Favour or Self-love put a great biaſs on the Inclination, and this on the Apprehenſion and Reaſon; hence *Right* and *Truth* being very differently

rently conceiv'd, their Cause is espous'd by all Parties, and all go different ways: And since whatever favours one side is prejudicial to the other, hence dislikes creep in, these grow up to Animosities, the Parties begin to regard one another as Adversaries, and then the Passions being excited, these draw in the Reason to their support, all is fill'd with Quarrels and Heats, and Christian Peace is at length quite broken.

Wherefore S. *Paul* supposing it will be the case of every Christian to come into these Circumstances, does not allow him to meet heat with heat, or encounter Passion with Passion; but rather requires him to yield, if the Controversie be of things indifferent; and if it be a *Right* that is to be asserted, to do it with the Arms of the Gospel, with Humility, Patience and Sweetness: This being the only way allow'd to Private Persons of gaining Victory, and triumphing over Adversaries. In this Posture they are best able to manifest the right they have, since being free from Passion, they are more compos'd, and have a great advantage in the liberty of their own Thoughts: They are out of danger of exasperating their Enemy by fierce and pro-

provoking Replys, and may likely calm and sweeten him by their Moderation and Temper; for tho' violent Opposition seldom makes Men just and reasonable; yet mildness often does it: And if they prevail not, they have at least the Satisfaction of the Humility and Patience they have practis'd, which may ballance, if not wholly take off the trouble of the injury receiv'd: For 'tis no small comfort, to enjoy an undisturb'd peace and tranquillity of Mind, without which they cannot possess God or their own Souls. Christian Prudence therefore, without any other Motives, is enough to oblige us to proceed with Patience under all provocations, and to convince us, that Choler, Opposition and Revenge, are treacherous succours, which instead of relieving, always help to encrease our Evils.

And now having these Prescriptions of Moderation and Peace left us in Holy Writ; nay, it being there commanded us, to return good for evil, to feed, cloth and assist our greatest Enemies, and thus overcome evil with good, is it not very strange, to see so very little of this practis'd, but that Contentions, Anger, Impatience and Revenge

venge are the common methods of the Professors of Christianity; that every little trifle puts them upon these, whereas 'tis their Duty to bear all Extremities, without the breach of Charity or Peace? May we not therefore justly fear Good Christians to be very few, since without considering the manifold Transgressions against other Precepts, the Offences against this one Duty excludes such vast numbers from all solid right to this Title of being the Children of God, and True Followers of their Master? Remedy this evil, we beseech thee, O God; and since thou hast appointed Charity to be the Character of thy Disciples, grant that all, who make Profession of being so, may faithfully practice what Thou hast commanded, and in this distinguish themselves from all others.

IV. *Sunday after Epiphany.*

EPISTLE.

Rom. C 13. V. 8. ends V. 10.

HE *that loves his Neighbour has fulfill'd the Law.* Eternal Happiness depending on the fulfilling the Law of God, 'tis no small comfort to find the whole extent of a Christian's Duty abridg'd into the narrow compass of one single Point, by which every one is made capable, without distraction or confusion, of examining into the state of his Soul, and discovering how fair he stands for the obtaining that Inheritance to which he pretends. And as for the Negative part, there needs no examining at all; for if *Loving our Neighbour* be fulfilling the Law, 'tis demonstration, that whoever is out of Charity with any Neighbour, fulfils it not, and consequently living in disobedience

bedience to God, muſt look on his Title to that Inheritance to be very weak, if not wholy void, which is promis'd and ſettled, not on Rebels, but on Faithful and Obedient Children. For Heaven is not to be obtain'd, but on thoſe very Terms and Conditions, which he has appointed, who is ſole Proprietor and Maſter of it: And ſince this here mention'd, is what he indiſpenſably requires, a breach of it muſt be a forfeiture of all Right and Claim.

But now to give a like ſatisfaction to the Affirmative part, is more difficult: for tho' it be indiſputable, that whoever loves his Neighbour, fulfils the Law; yet 'tis not ſo very eaſie to determin, who it is, that loves his Neighbour, as here requir'd; it being a matter ſubject to variety of miſtakes. And, firſt, 'tis evident *Common Civility* is not the practice of this Love, nor a ſufficient proof of a Heart being poſſeſs'd with it: for this is too often grounded on reſpects purely Human; as in Perſons of Quality, who are exact in all its niceties, to ſhew their Education and Politneſs: others of lower rank are induſtrious in all its points, to gain ſomething of a like eſteem and add to

their

their Reputation. And in all Conditions great numbers have no other motive of being Civil to all, than the fear of that Prejudice, which otherwise they may bring upon themselves, by being wanting in this part of breeding, in being Despis'd, Ridicul'd and Slighted. Vanity is another root of Civility in too many, who are pleas'd in the numbers of their Visits, and therefore are Civil to all, that in all accidents of Misfortune or Success, they may be followed with Crowds to Condole or Congratulate with them: 'tis the same in others, who by this means have the more frequent opportunity of going to such Acquaintance, where they hope to meet Company, who may admire their Riches, Beauty, or quaintness of Address. Idleness and Custom is another motive of Civility; many have nothing to do, and therefore by this way draw Company to pass their life away with less uneasiness to themselves: and others practice the same, without any other reason, but because 'tis the Fashion. Now in all these, who are thus Obliging and Civil, and have the repute of the World, 'tis plain, 'tis not the love of their Neighbour

bour, but Self-love that moves them, since in all they do, they only seek themselves, which cannot possibly be that branch of Charity, here describ'd to be the Fulness of the Law.

Secondly, 'Tis evident, that *Affability, Sweetness*, or *Common Friendship* is not *this love of our Neighbour*; because the two former have many times no better foundation than those above; *Vanity, Interest*, or *Self-love*; and therefore, however they may render Men Compleat and Acceptable, yet they cannot make them Virtuous. 'Tis generally the same as to *Ordinary Friendship*; for tho' there may be such a thing as Holy Friendship, which S. *Francis Sales* commends; yet Ordinary Friendships, are nothing but an Honourable sort of Traffic, by which Men design to make some advantage answerable to their different Pretensions or Passions: So that if it be not some Interest that promotes it, 'tis many times a Sensual Affection, which ushers in, under a pretended Innocence, such mischiefs, that instead of fulfilling the Law, it always weakens, and often ends in the open violation of it.

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The Love of our Neighbour then, that is the Fulfilling of the Law, is nothing of all these; but it is a Branch or Extension of the Love of God, by which a Christian desires for his Neighbour the Soveraign Good, desires God to his Neighbour, and his Neighbour to God. This Love begins in God, and from him flows upon all that bear his Image, that are Created by him, for the enjoyment of Eternal Happiness, and are Redeem'd by him, for the obtaining that Possession of Bliss. This Love is the Accomplishment of the Law; for tho' it requires not any express reflexion of thought, or sensible affection, by which the heart is carried with inclination towards every one; yet it absolutely requires a certain motion of the Will, by which it is inclin'd to desire and procure the good of every Neighbour, and is averse from every thing that may do him harm: And thus it fulfills the Law; for he that thus truly loves his Neighbour, cannot injure him, neither in his Goods, nor in his Reputation, nor in his Life, nor do him any sort of injustice. Hence 'tis plain, the Love S. *Paul* speaks of, is not a barren and unactive Love; but such

ſuch as is ever in readineſs to follow the Commands of God; ſuch as puts a reſtraint on the Will, in regard of whatever is forbid, and puſhes it forward, to diſcharge all the Dutys of Juſtice and Charity.

'Tis a Love always inclining to give relief to every Neighbour, conſidering the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt in every one that is in diſtreſs, and that whatever is done to them, is done to him. And tho' this Love has bounds as to its outward effects, ſince one Charity may be inconſiſtent with another, and Obligation to Family or Children, and oftentimes Sickneſs or Inability may either greatly limit, or render them wholly impracticable; yet 'tis always careful that neither Luxury, nor Ambition, nor Vanity, nor Covetouſneſs, nor a Diſtruſt of Providence, ſet bounds to the exerciſe of its Charity, either by diſabling or ſhutting its hands. But as to the Interior effects, which are never inconſiſtent, it is ever diligent in the practice of them, having always ſincere Deſires of aſſiſting thoſe, whom otherwiſe it cannot help: And therefore it continually prays for every Neighbour, ſuffers and bears with them: And theſe, no queſtion, are great

great Alms in the ſight of God, and ſuch as will have the Reward of all thoſe Actions, which their Circumſtances made them uncapable of performing.

Secondly, 'Tis a Love, which produces a Patience without bounds, and ſuch as is invincible under the greateſt Provocations; forgiving injuries, not only ſeven times, but ſeventy times ſeven. For there being none ſo great, which any Neighbour can do us, but what is capable of the Divine Mercy; therefore the Chriſtian, that has Charity, prays that every ſuch Neighbour may find this Mercy: And conſequently can never diſpenſe with himſelf, in not forgiving him; ſince 'tis impoſſible, he ſhould heartily pray, that God would pardon him, and he, on his part, refuſe the pardon, which he asks for him of God. And tho' he may be diſcourag'd with the apprehenſion of his Neighbour being profligately wicked, yet ſince, whatever his wickedneſs be, he is certainly miſerable too, 'tis with this conſideration God will have him look on every Neighbour, ſo to excite his compaſſion towards him: There being no ſufficient motive to conclude any irrecoverably wicked, till an impenitent

nitent Death has render'd all amendment impoſſible.

This is the Love, and theſe the Conditions of it, which fulfils the Law: Grant then; O God of infinit Goodneſs and Love, that in ſeeking this rich Jewel, we may not be deceiv'd with Counterfeit and falſe pretences; that we may never believe we have it, till we are convinc'd by its effects, in being deſirous and ready to aſſiſt, ſuffer and pray for every Neighbour: Till we find, that no injuries are able to ſhut our hands or hearts againſt him: This is the Charity, Bleſſed Redeemer, of which thou haſt given us example, and 'tis in this alone we can be ſecure.

V. *Sunday after the Epiphany.*

EPISTLE.

Coloſ. C. 3. V. 12. ends V. 17.

LEt the Peace of Chriſt rule in your hearts. The Peace of Chriſt is that, which the World cannot give. There may be great Satisfaction in the Goods and Enjoyments of this Life, in a plentiful eſtate, in Children, in Friends, in Honours, in Reputation, &c. but nothing of this is the Peace of Chriſt, for all theſe are common to the Heathen and Unbeliever as well as the Chriſtian; and if the Chriſtian finds Peace in them, 'tis the Peace only of the Natural Man and not of the Spiritual; 'tis a Peace, which recommends the World to him, and him to the World; but is no argument of his being a Member of Chriſt, or at peace with God: 'tis a Peace which the World gives, and the World can take away;

away; since upon every Fright or Change that happens, 'tis wholly lost, and, like the House built on the Sand, is overthrown by a Storm; and in this plainly shews, on what Foundation it stood; not on Christ, but the World: And therefore however desirable it may be to Sense and Nature, which ever seek such deceitful Goods; yet there is no such real advantage in it, that he is ever the better Christian that has it, or the worse that has it not. 'Tis true, if we regard the common Judgments of Men, they have no other Rule in pronouncing a Man Happy, but in proportion to these Worldly Enjoyments, which he possesses: And so of course, they conclude him Miserable, who has them not. Thus the World judges; but as this deceives others, so likewise it is deceiv'd it self: The Gospel declares its Error, and the Good Christian finds the sensible experience of it; who seeking Heaven feels a distraction in all that's Worldly; and that if he cannot, in spirit, separate himself from what he possesses of it, he becomes Miserable in the very enjoyment of that, for which he is reputed happy: So that all of this kind is so far from bringing him true Peace,

that it becomes a danger to him of destroying all inward quiet. He knows what powerful Charms these are to corrupt Nature, and if they prevail so far, as to gain possession of his heart, the love of these diminishes the Love of God; their dazling light darkens the light of Heaven, and tho' some superficial comforts attend this state; yet whenever he reflects with any serious thought upon himself, he then discovers a real misery within; he laments his great disorder, loses all Peace, and nothing but *not thinking* can moderate his sighs and Tears: And if he ever resolves to recover his internal quiet; he knows there's no other expedient, but what the Gospel prescribes, by really, or else in Spirit, renouncing whatever he enjoys: And thus in the midst of Worldly Blessings, courted and admir'd by all, he heartily envys their better state, who living obscur'd and hid from the World, enjoy what's sufficient to support nature, but have not enough to disquiet or draw their hearts from God.

The Peace then of Christ is not the effect of this kind of Blessings, but consists in a well order'd Conscience satisfied in all the accomplishments of God's

God's Will, and rejoycing in the Hope of Bliss: This is the Peace, the Apostle desires, should Reign in every Christian's Heart. He would not have it be only there in Thought, or in an unsettled way, as the effect of some Holy, but passing glance; what he requires, is, That it should be fixt, and like an Absolute Soveraign, command and over-rule all other affections and Passions of the mind whatever may appear, and seditiously strive to gain possession of that Post. He would have it so powerful, as to maintain its right and ground, in all Disappointments, Troubles, Losses, Afflictions in Life and Death. For in all these the Will of God appearing, however disagreeable they may otherwise be, yet still that Peace, which is built on the fulfilling God's Will, is to stand its ground. For, if a Christian, that daily prays; *Thy Will be done*, only then finds peace within, when every thing prospers and go's on smoothly according to his wish, and upon every Trouble, yields under the disorder of an unquiet mind: 'tis plain, his Peace was only the effect of his own Will being done, and not of God's. For since the Will of God is equally in all that happens of this kind,

tho' all cannot be alike to Nature, yet 'tis the Christian's Task to embrace all that comes, and still preserve his Peace: for since by Faith he discerns these Truths; That God ordains and governs all; that nothing happens without his Providence; that in whatever comes to pass in the World, he either exercises his Justice or his Mercy; that no Creature has any power, but what he gives; that all are either the Instruments or Ministers of his Decrees: In this he discovers sufficient Reasons to lay the foundations of a lasting Peace. For he always finds it reasonable and best, that God should govern and he obey; that God should guide and he follow; that he should conform himself to God's Will, and not desire, that God should submit to his: for that God's Will being always just, always Holy, it is likewise always Adorable, always worthy of his Submission and Love, tho' in its effects it sometimes proves uneasie and troublesom; and therefore he cannot disapprove or find fault with it, without being Unjust, because 'tis all what Justice it self does. Thus ever discerning the Will of God in all that happens, the sight of his Justice and Majesty checks all

all his Complaints and Impatience, and never permits him to go farther, in the moſt afflicting difficulties, than with *David* to cry out; *I held my peace and was humbled, becauſe it was Thou, O Lord, didſt it.*

And 'tis not to be wonder'd, he finds peace in the evils of this Life and the contradictions of Men, ſince he preſerves the ſame even in his Spiritual Infirmities, in his failings and faults, and in the contradiction and war of his own Paſſions and Thoughts. He labours, by a watchful diligence, to remedy all his Wilful faults, as well as he can; and humbles himſelf under all ſuch as are involuntary; he ſuffers whatever he cannot tell how to remedy; and ſince 'tis God's Will, he ſhould be in the World in this manner and with theſe Conditions, he quietly ſubmits, waiting on the Goodneſs of God for his perfect Cure, when he ſhall pleaſe to grant it. Thus the Peace of Chriſt always rules in his heart, and is ever victorious over all trouble; nothing appearing more certain to *him*, than to conclude, whenever he is ſenſible of Trouble, that it is God's Will he ſhould defend himſelf from it, as being nothing but a Temptation, which hin-

ders the Soul from acting, brings discouragements and a kind of sloth ever with it, & prevents the well doing all Duties, that then belong to him; and no pretexts are to be admitted for yielding under it: For Trouble, Anxiety and Dejection are always evil, and 'tis a most pressing obligation at all times to stand against them. So that I here most earnestly recommend it to all, not only in regard of those Disquiets occasion'd by some affliction; but likewise of those many Oppressions and Dejections, which are the effect of Constitution, and are rather an Indisposition or Distemper, than the consequence of any real evil: For these being as pernicious to all Christian Duties as the former, must with an equal care be resisted, whilst they destroy all inward Peace, which we are bound at all times to preserve. 'Tis even in these too a Christian ought to consider the Will of God, and look on them, as exercises he is pleas'd to send him, for the trial of his Submission and Patience: And he that accustoms himself to rest and be satisfied in the fulfilling God's most Holy Will, by degrees will find rest in these too, and be in a way

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of diminiſhing, if not wholy removing them; ſince a Submiſſion to God has ever the Bleſſing of interior Comfort attending it, and thus the Peace of Chriſt will be preſerv'd. Inſtruct all thy Faithful, O Bleſſed Redeemer, in this Leſſon: Divert them by thy Grace from ſeeking the Peace of this World, and direct them to a better, ſuch a Peace, which they learn from Thee, in thy perfect ſubmiſſion to thy Father's Will; a Peace, which may make them victorious over all Troubles, and ſecure them againſt all ſnares: Teach them to embrace thy Will in all things; this will give Reſt to their Souls, a Reſt, which will be conſummated at length in Thee.

VI. *Sunday after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE.

1 *Theſ.* C. 1. V. 2. ends V. 10.

WE *give thanks to God for you all without ceaſing, remembring you always in our Prayers.* An excellent Leſſon of Gratitude and Charity; evidently ſhewing what a deep impreſſion the Bleſſings of God had made in the Soul of this Apoſtle, and how great a Solicitude he had always for his Flock. Two neceſſary Duties for every Paſtor: for if God gives a Bleſſing to their Labours in doing good to their Flock, 'tis but juſt they ſhould with Gratitude daily acknowledge, whoſe Bleſſings they are; and to omit this point, as it argues their being either Forgetful or Inſenſible of the Mercy; ſo it may eaſily ſhut God's Hand againſt them, and be the occaſion of withdrawing his aſſiſtance, without which they can never hope for the like Succeſs. But giving thanks for what is

paſt,

paſt, is not ſufficient; for what can any Bleſſings avail the Flock, if there be not a continuance of them. They who acknowledge it an effect of the Divine Goodneſs, if by their means any have been reclaim'd from the miſery of Ignorance, Error or Vice, know it muſt be the effect of the ſame Heavenly Bounty to ſecure thoſe ſame Perſons againſt all danger of relapſing; and that, conſidering Human Weakneſs and the powerful Enemies of this Mortal State, all promiſing beginnings and greateſt improvements will come to nothing, if the Bleſſing of the ſame Hand, that begun, do's not perfect the work: Hence thoſe Paſtors, who have ſeen any fruit of their labours, are Solicitous, with St. *Paul*, to beg God's Mercy on all thoſe, who have receiv'd benefit from their endeavours, daily remembring them in their Prayers, and begging God to be their Protection againſt the dangers of their own weakneſs and the Solicitations of all Enemies. And truly whoever conſiders the infinit miſcarriages of the Flock, for want of this Divine aſſiſtance, in the numbers of thoſe, who after zealous and fervent beginnings, have either return'd

return'd to the Vomit, or loſt all ſenſe of Duty, by giving themſelves up to Habitual Sloth or Vice, will find ſufficient reaſon for the daily practice of this Charitable Devotion. And, no queſtion, it was the ſenſe of this danger and Inconſtancy inſeparable from this our ſtate of Corruption, mov'd the Apoſtle daily to perform this Charity.

And may we not in this diſcover ſome grounds of believing the Bleſſed in Heaven to pray before the Throne of God, in behalf of all thoſe, they have left behind in this vale of Miſery? For ſince this is the effect of Charity, and *Charity*, as S. *Paul* ſays, *never ceaſes*; *nunquam excidit*; but is much more perfect in Heaven than on Earth, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that where it is more perfect, it cannot be more barren and unactive, but muſt be practis'd in greater Perfection. S. *Paul* and all Chriſtians, whilſt as yet in this imperfect ſtate, knowing the great neceſſities and dangers of their fellow Members, cannot be ſuppos'd to have Charity, if they put up not their Prayers to their Common Father for the obtaining for them his help; and can it

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be imagin'd this Charity when rais'd in Heaven to a much higher degree, ſhould do leſs? Thoſe Bleſſed Souls now glorified, are ſtill Members of the Myſtical Body of Chriſt, they are enflam'd with the Love of God, this Love is not more confin'd for being in Heaven, and therefore extends it ſelf, as before, to all their fellow-Members; Fervent Deſires of their eternal Good, are the neceſſary Conſequence of this Love; and effectual Deſires, cannot be ſeparated from contributing to it all they can: Being therefore in preſence of that inexhauſtible Goodneſs, by whoſe Mercy they themſelves were conducted thro' all dangers, and effectually deſiring the ſame Mercy for all as are ſtill in want, theſe Deſires are accompanied with Prayers, for the filling up the number of the Elect. Thus all Good Souls whether in Heaven or Earth, being Members of the ſame Body, deſire the good of this Body, and are united in Prayers, for the drawing down the Bleſſings of its Head on all that belong to it: And 'tis of theſe Prayers all Good Chriſtians deſire to partake, and deſiring it they likewiſe Pray for it; that ſo, what is

wanting

wanting thro' their infirmities, they may hope to have ſupplied by this common Charity.

The Prayers then of others may be a help to Chriſtians for the application of Chriſt's merits to their Souls; but 'tis only a help and cannot alone ſuffice. There are other particulars, which S. *Paul* commends in the *Theſſalonians*, and at the ſame time recommends them to our care and practice: As

Firſt, The *Works of Faith*, that is a Faith active and lively, which manifeſts it ſelf in the exact obſervance of all the Commandments.

Secondly, A *Firm Hope*, which lets not go its hold of God under the ſevereſt Tryals: And

Thirdly, A *Laborious Charity*, which takes pains for obtaining the Perfection neceſſary for the ſecuring our future ſtate. 'Tis in the conſtant practice of theſe Virtues conſiſts a Chriſtian Life, and conſequently, by theſe a Chriſtian ought to be diſtinguiſh'd from all others. So that 'tis not enough for one that profeſſes this Name, to go on juſt in the ſame method, and doing the very ſame things, he would otherwiſe

do,

do, were he no Christian at all; but he ought generally so to act, that what he does, may be a proof of his Soul being influenc'd by these Divine Virtues. For as for the Lawyer assisting his Clyents, the Physician making his Visits, the Shop-keeper following his Trade, Servants working, Parents providing for Children and Family, &c. All this is nothing but what they would faithfully do, were they only Moral Heathens and no Christians. For tho' the careful performance of these common Duties may be all Christian Actions and very instrumental to the gaining eternal Life, if done upon due Motives and referr'd to God; yet since they may be all perform'd too upon other Principles, as of Interest, Custom, or the Inclinations of Natural Constitution, which strongly move some to a great exactness in whatever they undertake; therefore there's a necessity of something beyond this to discover with some assurance, whether a Christian proceeds, in what he does, on those better motives of Faith, Hope and Charity, which ought to have the direction of his Life, and may give testimony, that his Actions are the

the Effects and Works of these Virtues.

And for this I know no better Rule, than for every one to observe, how they proceed in performing such Duties, which sometimes are contrary to all human interest, or at least have no such interest depending on them: If they are equally Solicitous and Faithful in satisfying these, truly they have then great reason to believe, that what they do, are the works of Faith, of Hope and of Charity: But if it appears otherwise in them; that they are ever diligent and zealous in all things, that have a prospect of some *Gain* or *Reputation* at the end of them; but in such as have no connection with these, and regard only God and his Justice and their Souls good, are cold and careless; as in mastering their own Passions, avoiding the Occasions of sin, by depriving themselves of some temporal convenience, in maintaining the cause of Justice and Truth with hazard to themselves, in affording their Souls due nourishment in daily Reading and Praying, truly all Coldness and Neglect in such particulars, is enough to make them conclude, that Worldly respect;

ſpects have a much greater ſhare in what they do, than the Faith or Love of God.

For if a Paſtor, Phyſician or Lawyer, there zealouſly gives attendance, where he has the encouragement of a temporal reward, and generally makes ſome excuſe, when the Poor are to be help'd, If Parents are careful to gratifie their Children, in ſuch things, which, like little Charms, are fit to gain or encreaſe their Love, but omit all ſuch ways, as are neceſſary to moderate their Paſſions and prepare them for a virtuous Life: If Servants are diligent under their Maſter's Eye; but are then wanting to their Duty, when they have no witneſs of their ſloth: This is very near a demonſtration, that all they do are not the Works of Faith or of Charity, but of Intereſt and Self-love. And what proof then can theſe give of their being Chriſtians, who move not by the Springs or Principles of the Goſpel, but go on in the very ſame method, they would do, were they no Pretenders to that Profeſſion? And yet, O God, is not this the too general practice of thoſe that own that Name? They ſay, they have a Faith of Eternal Goods, that

that they hope one day to be poſſeſs'd of them, and that they Love Thee: But where are the marks of this Profeſſion, whilſt the Love of themſelves and the Intereſt of this World appear ſo viſibly in almoſt all they do? *Omnes quæ ſua ſunt quærunt*, I fear is their too general Character; and how canſt Thou come to be their Eternal poſſeſſion, who here take ſo little care to ſeek Thee? Give ear therefore, we beſeech Thee, to the Prayers of all the Juſt, whether on Earth or in Heaven, who are ever ſolicitous for the welfare of their Brethren, and thro' the infinit merits of thy Only Son, grant in the plentiful effuſion of thy Grace, an effectual remedy to this evil.

Septuagesima Sunday.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 9. V. 24. ends C. 10. V. 5.

RUN *so that you may gain the Prize.* With this Day the Church begins her Preparation for the Solemn Fast of *Lent* now approaching; and by the Purple Colour of her Vestments and silencing the usual *Alleluiahs* and Hymns of Joy in her Publick Service, she seems to expect, that by a general Humiliation and Mourning, her Children should prepare for this great Fast; that by this way, they may obtain that grace, which is necessary for their due observance of it, and reaping that benefit, which she designs them in satisfying the Justice of God, and being cleans'd from all their sins. For this end is propos'd to them in this Epistle the true state of Christians in this life; and

and the true Spirit, by which they are to prevent all the miſchiefs of it occaſion'd by their own Infirmities and wickedneſs. Their State is repreſented by the Apoſtle, in *Men running a Race*, where, he ſays, *All run, but all gain not the Prize*: Wherefore, ſays he, *ſo run, that you may gain it.* We are all now actually upon this Race, all haſtning to an Eternity: There's Propos'd a Prize of Everlaſting Bliſs: And who ſhall gain it? Only thoſe that run well. 'Tis a point therefore every one ought ſeriouſly to conſider this Day, and ſee, whether they make any advance towards it: Following the Alluſion will be ſome help for their making a true judgment of themſelves. For, as in a Race, thoſe who run from the Mark, are not in a poſſibility of winning, if they turn not their courſe; but the more they go on, the farther they are out of the way; Thoſe, who fall, are in a like impoſſibility, if they riſe not again and with new Vigour purſue their Courſe: Thoſe who are at a ſtand, or go out of their way, are in evident danger of loſing the Prize, if by extraordinary diligence they regain not the ground

and

and time that was loſt: and only thoſe ſtand fair for the Crown, who are ever careful with their beſt ſpeed to advance. So it is with us in the Race of this life; and in proportion to this, may every one judge of himſelf. Tell me therefore, dear Chriſtian, what is thy State: thou art on thy Race; and believeſt Heaven the recompence of thoſe that win: How is it with thee? Doſt thou make forwards apace? Or art thou quite at a ſtand? Do'ſt thou go out of thy way? Do'ſt thou lie down in Deſpair? Or do'ſt thou run ſtill farther from what thou pretend'ſt to gain? Living in a ſinful State, is running from the Mark, and with thy back towards God and Heaven: An immoderate affection of Creatures, tho' in themſelves lawful, is going out of the way: Sloth and Tepidity, is ſtanding quite ſtill, if it be not worſe: Anxiety and Dejection, is lying on the ground: and only the Love of God, a Zeal for his Law and a ſincere Repentance after Sin, is that which carries thee forward on thy way. Conſider now; art thou running forward or backward? Art thou at a ſtand or going out of the way? The time granted for finiſhing the Race is not

long;

long; when death comes, it will then appear, where thou art; and as thou art then found, so it will be with thee for ever: And will it not be a terrifying instant to thee, if, when the time of thy Race is expir'd, it shall be then found, thou hast scarce ever seriously begun it, or after a fervorous setting forth, hast permitted trifles to stop thy course, or quite put thee out of the way? This misfortune the Church as a Tender Mother Solicitous for all her Children, is desirous to prevent: and having reason to apprehend great numbers to be under these ill circumstances, and that very few can pretend an exemption therefore She here lays before them such means, as may be effectual for regaining the time, whatever has been lost, and removing such Obstacles, as have hitherto been a hindrance to them in their way, and may be a great help for happily finishing that part of their Race, which is yet to come.

The first thing prescrib'd is included in those words of S. *Paul*, where he says, That those who pretend to carry the Prize in any Publick Game *abstain from all things*, that may be a hindrance to them: And if they observe this method

thod, who contend for a *Corruptible Crown*; how much more ought Christians to do the same, who are engag'd for a *Crown that is incorruptible?* 'Tis the Apostle's inference, and carries with it this advice, that all Christians, who think in earnest to gain this Crown, are under a necessity of practising a like *Rigorous Abstinence*, such as not only regards their Diet, but every thing, which they experience to be a hindrance to them; *Ab omnibus se abstinet.* 'Tis the misfortune of this mortal State, that our Inclinations being corrupt, lead us, not only to what is inconvenient and dangerous, but likewise inconsistent with the well finishing our Race; and 'tis the indulging and following these, puts as many as are put by, quite out of their way: Hence is the occasion of all the stops and stands we make, hence all the hazard of losing the Crown. Now if our Misfortune be in *Following*, our Happiness must be in *Denying* our Inclinations, which the Apostle calls *Abstaining*; and 'tis only thus we can hope for success. Every one must consider for themselves, in what particulars this Abstinence is principally

to

to be practis'd: Their general and most repeated Faults will be their best direction; it may be in the Government of the Tongue, of the Eyes, or the Affections; it may be in regard of Company, Divertisements or Expences; it may be in the moderation of Passion, Fretfulness, Vanity, Covetousness, Self-love; in the overcoming Animosities, Ill-will or Sloth. Whereever the Excess has been, there must be now the Abstinence. This is the Gospel-Expedient of Self-denial, necessary for removing all Obstacles out of our way, and to put us in the best method for coming to a happy end of our Race, and gaining the Crown.

But if ill Habits prove obstinate and will not yield, neither must a Christian yield to them, but is under a kind of necessity of taking some more rigorous way, as may be advisable by those, to whom it belongs to judge of this Leprosie and prescribe its Cure. The Example of this Apostle is Motive sufficient, who being then upon the Race, as we now are, *Ego quidem curro*, and not willing to hazard any thing in this

this important affair, tho' we know not of any neceſſity, yet for greater ſecurity, practis'd this advice upon himſelf. *I chaſtiſe my Body*, ſays he, *and bring it into ſubjection; leſt, while I preach to others, I my ſelf ſhould become a Reprobate.* Now if this great Apoſtle thought not fit to diſpenſe with himſelf in this kind of Mortification, how vain muſt the arguments of our Preſumption, Niceneſs and Self-love be, in favouring and exempting our ſelves, who ſtand ſo much more in need of it? If he, whoſe Life was the continual practice of a moſt laborious Charity, who otherwiſe ſuffer'd ſo much in Faſting, Watching, in Priſons and repeated Martyrdoms, thought himſelf not yet ſecure enough, but ſtill added voluntary Mortification to all the reſt, what can we pretend? 'Tis a terrible Leſſon, and ſuch as muſt neceſſarily raiſe Confuſion, where it does not move to imitation.

In this double Preſcription the Church prepares us for *Lent*, and lets us know, what is expected from us. And do Thou, O God, we beſeech Thee, inſpire all thy Servants with

ſuch a true ſenſe of their State, and with the reſolutions of uſing ſuch means, as may be now ſeaſonable, and moſt effectual for finiſhing well the Race in which they are. Grant they may not run, as it were at hazard, by loſing the ſight of the place, to which they pretend to go: Grant they may not fight, as it were beating the Air, in preſuming to overcome, without mortifying their Senſuality and Concupiſcence; but that they may ſo diligently purſue their Courſe, that at the end they may gain the Crown.

Sexageſima Sunday.

EPISTLE.

2 *Cor.* C. 11. V. 19. ends C. 12. V. 9.

I Have ſuffer'd *in labour and trouble, in much Watching, in Hunger and Thirſt, in much Faſting, in Cold and Nakedneſs.* The Subject of this Epiſtle, are the Commendations of St. *Paul*, and ſuch as he gives of himſelf. a thing ſeemingly unſuitable to a Diſciple of the Croſs, and a True Profeſſor of Humility. But 'twas what the ill Circumſtances of the *Corinthians* had oblig'd him to, and was not the effect of Vain-glory, but of his great Zeal and Charity in deſiring their good, tho' with the hazard of being cenſur'd for Pride and Self-conceit. In his abſence Falſe Apoſtles

had inſinuated themſelves amongſt the *Corinthians*, and abuſing their credulity, corrupted them with Errors: Upon which St. *Paul* writes this Epiſtle in order to undeceive them, and for this end lays before them the great advantages he had above their New Teachers, and that if they would conſider the greatneſs of his Sufferings, or the wonder of his Revelations, they might have ſufficient motives to believe him a true Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, and hold faſt his Doctrine; and that in departing from him, they had ſo far abandon'd Chriſt himſelf: So that all his endeavours of raiſing an eſteem of himſelf in the minds of this People, was not to ſeek himſelf, but only to regain them to the Soveraign Paſtor and Biſhop of their Souls. A good model for us, and ſuch, I wiſh we could ſo follow, as never to ſay or do any thing in raiſing an eſteem of our ſelves, but only when forc'd to it for the good of others.

But now, while we ſee St. *Paul* endeavouring to prove himſelf an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, and principally grounding his Proof on the evidence

of

of his Sufferings, may not we in this diſcover a good inſtruction the Church deſigns for all the Faithful, *viz.* If they deſire to give proof of their being True Believers and Diſciples of Chriſt, it cannot be better done than by ſuffering: 'Tis propos'd to them at this time, becauſe we are now approaching to *Lent*, when all Chriſtians are ſummon'd to enter into a ſtate of Penance, for the Puniſhment of Sin, and breaking the ſtrength of thoſe Paſſions, whoſe Violence has been the occaſion of their Sin; and, no queſtion, but thoſe, who ſuffer truly for this end, will in this give teſtimony of their being True Diſciples. There's ſcarce any ſin, but what is the effect of ſome ill habit or Paſſion, and none can ſincerely deſire to remedy this, if they will not uſe proper means for the weakning ſuch Paſſions: This brings an obligation of ſuffering ſomething in Self-denial and Mortification. Again, there's no ſin, but what we are oblig'd to forſake and repent of; now there being no ſincere Repentance or Converſion, where there is not an effectual Deſire of ſatisfying the Divine Juſtice by worthy fruits of Penance, this en-

gages every Repenting Sinner in a Life of Penance and Suffering, proportion'd to their Sins and to their Strength. And tho' Custom, or a just condescendance of the Church has remitted very much of the Antient Rigour of Fasting and of those laborious Penances formerly impos'd on Returning Sinners; yet no Penitent can so think himself dispens'd with, as if there was not now a like necessity of satisfying the Divine Justice, as in the Primitive times; for tho' the Discipline of the Church may not, yet the Justice of God, which is unchangeable, still requires the same. This ought to be done one way or other: Such whose Health or Circumstances will not permit a complyance with those Austerities or Mortifications, which the Church at this time recommends, would do well to make recompence for it in some other Self-denials and good works. And therefore they are much to be commended, who, on just Motives, requiring to be dispens'd with as to the rigour of Fasting, desire some other penal or pious obligation to be laid on them, whereby, tho' they Fast not, yet they may

may be included in the number of those who suffer for their sins. Thus every one, without exception, of all Ages and Conditions, have it in their power to give proof of their being Christ's Disciples, by suffering something for the overcoming their own Passions and adding their Mite to that Treasure of Satisfactions, which they have in Christ, and which by this suitable concurrence and union of the Members with their Head, may be effectually applied to them, for the obtaining pardon of their sins and the full discharge of whatever Debt they have contracted by them.

Hence may be plainly discover'd the ill management of those, who complying in some manner with the Letter of the Law, in eating but one meal a day and a Collation at night in *Lent*, take care so to Study their Inclinations, as industriously to take off all manner of Suffering and Mortification from what they do, whether it be by their frequent supping of Coffee, Chocolate, or drinking Ale or Wine betwixt Meals, without any kind of necessity, or making their Collations so Savory,

that thro' the whole *Lent* they cannot pretend to have punish'd, but ever contriv'd to gratifie and please themselves. For tho' these satisfie themselves in having comply'd with the Law, and remove all scruples, notwithstanding their wilful exclusion of all manner of Mortification from their Fast, upon these two Principles, of the *End of the Law not falling under the Law*; and *Liquids not breaking the Fast*: Yet they must acknowledge it, even in the most favourable Sense, very ill management still, who so order their Affairs, as to comply with a Law, and at the same time purposely exclude themselves from all the benefit of it. Should they pay their Money in this manner for the satisfying a Debt, and so order the payment, that the Debt should appear still in force against them, they would not only condemn this as an indiscretion, but as an injustice done to themselves, in depriving themselves of the benefit of what they had done: 'Tis likewise a very irrational way of acting; for since all Rational and Human Actions ought to have regard to the end, for which they are done; how can this way of fasting, pass for Rational

nal or Human, which is not only not directed to its end, but where means are us'd on purpose to prevent its coming to that end, for which it is intended by God and his Church? And may not there be here some grounds to apprehend, that this is not complying with the Law? For tho' the Law judges not of the interior; yet can it be imagin'd, the Church commands such an Action of Christians, which is not Rational and Christian? Can it possibly command, what it reproves? And is not all that reprov'd, where the Heart accompanies not the outward action? For what is this, but Pharisaical and Lip-worship? Such a Fast then, which is designedly perverted from its end, connot be the Church Fast; and if they, who follow this undue method, think they do not break their Fast, I think they can't pretend at least to keep the *Lent*, which the Church prescribes; but only such as Beasts may keep, and I believe, were even outdone in this by the Beasts of *Ninive*. And here let them consider, how this can be excus'd from sin: For if Christians are under an obligation of referring to God, and doing all, what-

ever they do, in the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; certainly this obligation is more preſſing in ſuch things, which are of Precept and commanded by God and his Church; this is the end of them; to omit the referring them to this end, cannot be without fault; and what then muſt it be, purpoſely to pervert them from this end? Is not this a deſign'd perverting an Eternal Law and the Order God has eſtabliſh'd: and can this be without ſin? And how can Faſting or any other Action of Precept be truly referr'd to God, when it is on purpoſe diverted from thoſe intermediate ends, for which it is enjoyn'd us by God? This cannot be; it being contrary to the Rule of *Sancta Sanctè*: *Holy Actions* are to be done in a *Holy manner*: And to the expreſs Command, God gave to *Moſes*: *Quod Juſtum eſt, juſtè perſequêris*: Deut. 16. 20. where he requires not only *Juſtice* to be done, but alſo, that it be done in a *juſt manner*. God commands the *Action*, and likewiſe the *manner of doing it*: He that obſerves one and neglects the other, offends againſt the Law-giver. How then can this Law of Faſting be

truly

truly obſerv'd, if ſo little regard be had to the manner of keeping it, that the Letter of the Law being in ſome degree obſerv'd, it is ſo far from being what the Law deſigns, that it wholy fruſtrates all the ends of it? This can be nothing leſs than mocking God and his Church, and is a neglect of ſuch means, which are ordain'd for our Salvation. And if there be any, who make a difficulty in underſtanding it: let them but imagine they had Servants or Children complying with their poſitive Orders, as they do with this Precept of the Church, without any regard to what they intend, but purpoſely finding ways to make void all they deſign, and they'll ſoon ſee, where the fault is, and that it carries with it Diſobedience and Contempt. To exclude then voluntarily and by contrivance all Mortification and Suffering from the Faſt of *Lent*, which are the end of the Precept, cannot paſs for a juſt obſervance of the Command; neither can they, who practice this method, prove themſelves true Diſciples.

Quin-

Quinquageſima Sunday.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* C. 13. the whole Chapter.

IF *I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profits nothing.* The Church deſigning our keeping *Lent*, ſtould be acceptable to God, and beneficial to our own Souls, on this day takes care to propoſe to us one Condition abſolutely neceſſary for this end. For aſſuring us from the Apoſtle, that the actions of the greateſt Virtues ſuch as are diſtributing all our Goods to feed the Poor, and giving our Bodies to be burnt, are not at all available to Salvation, if we have not Charity; we are in this aſſur'd that the moſt exact and even rigorous obſervance of *Lent*, will profit nothing to our Eternal

nal good, if it be done without Charity; and therefore, that whoever designs to keep a Fast acceptable to God, and to their Souls advantage, ought to do their best to be provided of this so necessary and indispensable a Virtue, that so they may not Fast in vain.

Now by this Charity is not meant only *Giving to the Poor*, as 'tis vulgarly understood; for the Apostle supposes one may distribute all he has to the Poor, and yet be without Charity: But by this Charity is understood, The Love of God and of our Neighbour, a Love, which is the fulfilling of the whole Law; and so 'tis describ'd here by the Apostle, who gives this description of it; *Charity is Patient and Mild; Charity is not Envious, does nothing rashly, 'tis not puffed up, 'tis not Ambitious; it seeks not its own Interest, it is not provok'd, it thinks no evil, it rejoyces not in Iniquity, but rejoyces in the Truth, it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, suffers all things, Charity never fails.* And 'tis this Charity every Christian should have, who desires to observe the approaching Fast, or perform any act of Virtue, so as to find

find acceptance with God; for whatever he does without it, profits nothing: a terrible Sentence, and such as ought to put every one upon making great preparations in bringing their Souls to this necessary disposition, before they enter upon the Fast of *Lent*: and it being thus necessary, it cannot be improper to consider it more in particular, that so we may have the better opportunity of examining into the State of our Souls, not only in regard of this time, but all others and of Eternity too, since by this we are to stand or fall. We must have Charity then; and what is it? What are the Qualities of it? The Apostle answers, and hear it expounded by an excellent hand, in relation both to God, our Selves and our Neighbour.

Charity is Patient; it suffers all the seeming delays of God, and tho' ardently desiring, yet peaceably waits his time. It is sensible of its own Miseries, bewails them before God, and ever waits for its Deliverance. It quietly bears the imperfections of every Neighbour, hopes for their

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Amendment without Impatience, and asks it of God without being tired.

Charity is Mild, submitting to the Conduct of God without opposition or disquiet; peaceable and moderate is all its own Actions, and far from giving any wilful Disturbance to others.

Charity is not Envious, as to the Glory, which God enjoys, nor appropriates to it self his Gifts; it rejoyces that God is God, and gives daily thanks for his infinite Glory. It is content with the method God takes in perfecting the inward Man, at the Expence, Humiliation and Mortification of the Outward Man. It rejoyces in the good of others, as its own, and consents they should have the advantage of him.

Charity does nothing rashly; performing all its Duties to God with Prudence, Circumspection and Advice: For it self it does all according to Discretion and Measure; and

for

for its Neighbour, with Consideration and observing that Order, which God has establish'd.

Charity is not puff'd up nor Ambitious: it loves God's Greatness, and regards all things belonging to him with Esteem, Respect and Religion: It is always little in its own Eyes, disesteems whatever is from it self, considers every Neighbour in the most favourable sense, and it self beneath all.

Charity seeks not its own interest: It has principally and above all things the Glory and Will of God before its Eyes, is ready to Sacrifice to these its own private interest and convenience, is jealous and fearful of seeking it self in what it does, and sincerely endeavours to make every Neighbour's Interest its own.

Charity is not provok'd: It submits to the severest Appoinments of God in silence and undisturb'd; charges all whatever it suffers, on its own sins, but without disquiet; and whatever Zeal it has against sin,

it

it has ever Compassion on the Sinner.

Charity thinks no Evil: It is full of the Sanctity and Justice of God, considers and justifies these in all things; and tho' it condemns its own sins; yet, except where oblig'd, it sees nothing but the Good, which its Neighbour has, and its Heart is fill'd with Designs and Desires, Pure, Holy and Edifying.

Charity rejoyces not in Iniquity: It laments every thing that dishonours God, Zealously takes part with his Justice against its own sins, bewails and punishes in it self the sins of others, however advantageous they may otherwise be to him.

Charity rejoyces in the Truth: It is happy even in this World, by entring into the participation of the Joy, Beauty and Triumph of that Truth, which is the Happiness of the Saints: It rejoyces in the knowledge of that truth, which is so difficult in the practice, because by this

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it shall be deliver'd from its own corruption: It loves Good, whereever it is; the Conformity to this it Loves in every Neighbour, and 'tis its Joy to make them love it.

Charity bears all things: It adores the severity of God's Judgments, as much as his Patience and Long-suffering; and whilst it sincerely endeavours to remedy, yet it bears with its own Failings and Humours, and more with those of the Persons with whom it lives.

Charity believes all things: It has no exception as to any thing of Faith, because God's Authority and Truth is equally in all; it embraces not only the Divine Mysteries, but likewise those Truths, which prescribe Mortification and the Cross, the Love of Enemies and pardoning Injuries.

Charity hopes all things: Its Hopes has no more bounds, than the Fidelity and Power of God, which are infinite: It draws Motives of Hope from the consideration of its own weakness and nothing; and hopes more for its Neigh-

Neighbour than it self, because it believes others more Faithful and more Humble.

Charity suffers all things: It suffers all for God, because this all is nothing, and God is all: It is never Tired, and thinks it cannot suffer too much for Salvation; and is ready to purchase its Neighbors eternal good at the expence of all.

Charity never fails: Because it is the only Virtue, that shall never have end; because as it is the Beginning, so it is the End, Perfection and Crown of all other Virtues; it is the eternal Bond of all the Members with one another, and with Jesus Christ their Head: It is by this both Head and Members shall be eternally consummated in God, who is Charity: It is this which shall make the Sacrifice and all the Religion of Heaven, in Glorifying God for all Eternity.

Here's the true Description of Charity, without which neither Fasting nor any Act of Virtue or Religion can find accep-

acceptance with God: 'Tis that with which all Christians ought to be possess'd, who sincerely aim at Eternity. And tho' this Charity here in this life, can never come to that perfection, in which the Blessed enjoy it in Heaven; yet some degrees of it we ought to have; and it is to be our daily business so to advance in it, that we may have reason to hope, that notwithstanding our daily oversights and failings, it is this which generally directs our life and influences the main body of our Actions. Such a degree of it, we ought to have at this time; but it must be the gift of thy Mercy, O God; grant it therefore, we beseech thee, to all the Faithful, that entring now into a State of Penance, their Fasting, their Self-denials, their Prayers and Alms may be regarded by thee, and be effectual to the cancelling all their Sins; since without it, we know, all will profit nothing.

FINIS.

Dr. *BAYLIE's*

Challenge.

IT will not be denied but that the Church of *Rome* was once a moſt pure, excellent, flouriſhing and Mother Church. † *Rom.* 1. 8. *Rom.* 16. *Rom.* 6. White, *defence of his way*, p. 43. 4 *King* James *in his Speech to the Parliament.* Whitaker *in his Anſwer to Dr. Sand.* 2 *demonſtrat.* Pul *in c.* 22. *Theſ.* S. 7. Reynolds *in his* 5 *concluſion.*

This Church could not ceaſe to be ſuch, but ſhe muſt fall either by Apoſtaſie, Hereſie, or Schiſm.

1. *Apoſtacy* is not only a renouncing of the Faith of Chriſt, but the very Name and Title to Chriſtianity: No

Man

Man will say, that the Church of *Rome* had ever such a fall, or fell thus.

2. *Heresie* is an adhesion to some private and singular Opinion, or error in Faith, contrary to the general approved Doctrine of the Church.

If the Church of *Rome* did ever adhere to any singular or new Opinion disagreeable to the common received Doctrin of the Christian World, I pray satisfie me to these particulars, *viz.*

1. By what General Council was she ever condemned?

2. Which of the Fathers ever writ against her? Or,

3. By what authority was she otherwise reproved. For,

It seems to be a thing very incongruous, that so great a Church should be condemned by every one that hath a mind to condemn her.

4. *Schisme* is a departure or division from the Unity of the Church, whereby the Band and Communion held with some former Church, is broken and dissolved.

If ever the Church of *Rome* divided her self by *Schism* from any other Body of faithful Christians, or break Communion, or went forth from the Society

ciety of any Elder Church: I pray ſatisfie me as to theſe Particulars.

1. Whoſe company did ſhe leave?

2. From what Body did ſhe go forth?

3. Where was the true Church which ſhe forſook?

For it appears a little ſtrange to me that a Church ſhould be accounted Schiſmatical, when there cannot be aſſigned any other Church different from her, (which from Age to Age, ſince Chriſt his time has continued viſible) from whence ſhe departed.

FINIS.